

# **STRANGE BEDFELLOWS**

my crazy-quilt memoirs,  
life-maxims, and what-not

by **Don Herold**













*strange* *bedfellows*



# BOOKS

*by* don herold

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

SO HUMAN

OUR COMPANIONATE GOLDFISH

THERE OUGHT TO BE A LAW

BIGGER AND BETTER



# *strange* bedfellows

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and what-not

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"All the world's a bed, and all the people and all the things in it are strange bedfellows."

— *Shakespeare*

\* \*

"A bed! A bed! My kingdom for a bed!"

— *Shakespeare*

\* \*

"We are born in bed, most of us die in bed, and in the interim we meet many strange bedfellows."

— *Alexander the Great*

\* \*

"We spend two-thirds of our lives in bed."

— *Simmons Bed Company*





## BETWEEN THE COVERS

\* \*

*born—on the wrong side of the bed?  
my career as an outdoor man  
celebrities i have known  
my first dog—and some later ones  
bloomfield notes  
my attitude towards sickness  
they send me away to college  
four years of waste  
my fried chicken policy  
how i became a bridge hater  
america—a whittle-ocracy  
—then i marry, in 1916  
why i took up worry  
one of the big men i have met  
another interesting interview  
my \$80,000 teeth  
comparison charlie  
i make a suggestion to some magazine publisher  
in 1918, doris, our first baby, is born  
at our summer camp—light summer reading  
another of my many accomplishments  
i begin to worry about sending doris to college  
hildegarde arrives in 1925  
fever in children  
how i exploded the early-rising theory*

BETWEEN THE COVERS

*when i lived in new york  
more hate for new york  
after my impacted-molar extraction  
i reflect seriously on silliness  
i answer the doorbell  
doris joins the traffic  
my favorite aunt explains her policy  
i get sick of commuting and move back to new york  
when we moved from a bronxville house to a new york  
apartment  
then i defend new york as a place to live  
i have my tonsils out  
i take up good hard laziness  
i decide to be less systematic  
some neglected correspondence  
then we decided to move to los angeles  
renting a furnished house in los angeles  
creative ecstasy  
i visit tia juana, new mexico  
i take my fourth trip to san francisco  
i visit the grand canyon of arizona  
second-hand car not for sale  
goldfish for zest  
mustaching the months away  
i visit aimee mcpherson's temple  
children are strange bedfellows (a speech)  
beaches make strange bedfellows  
bringing back the sleeping porch  
new york, after a recess  
the art of bronchitis  
new york traffic, mother of the arts*



*strange* *bed fellows*



born—on the wrong side of the bed?

After supper, on July 9, 1889, a little boy baby was born to Mr. and Mrs. Ot Herold, in a big bed in Bloomfield, Indiana.

That little boy baby was I.

That is perhaps where I got the bed complex which has bothered me all my life. (The dominating impulse of my life has been to go to bed.) (The new psychologists tell us that our character is formed the first twenty minutes of our lives.)

Little did Mr. and Mrs. Herold know that that little boy baby was destined to become one of the world's greatest—(but we will go into that tiresomely later in this book).

All they knew was that they loved their little baby. (As thousands of others have loved him since, with less reason.)

During darker moments of my life I have sometimes thought I was born on the wrong side of the bed, but, taking everything into consideration, I am glad I was born. 'Tis better to have been born and lost than never to have been born at all.

When I was six years old, the Herolds moved from Franklin Street in Bloomfield to a somewhat larger house on Mechanic Street. This didn't seem to make much difference in my career. I merely mention it.



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Visitors to Bloomfield are now shown the barn on Mechanic Street, on the hayloft door of which there is still to be seen (when the door is swinging open) in letters four feet high, the painted word "DON." Thus, even at six, I was showing aptitude for literature, art, and notoriety.

The title of this book might seem to have political significance, for we have all heard the old saying "Politics make strange bedfellows." But there are strange bedfellows in all walks of life—in business, in pleasure, in the arts and sciences, in Pullman cars, in golf foursomes, in church, in college, in our clubs, in travel, and even in the home. Marriage makes stranger bedfellows than any other institution.

And to one of a philosophical turn of mind, all the facts of life are strange bedfellows. Ah yes, this life is full of ridiculous juxtapositions. In a walk along a single block of almost any street we may find six different kinds of churches, two speakeasies, and a filling station. In a half day's time we may make observations and hear things that seem utterly insane when placed end to end with each other. This thought is what I wish to express in the title of this book. If you have thought of the title of this book in any other sense, it shows what kind of mind you have.

A man has to look a little cockeyed at the whole kaleidoscopic mess in order to see rhyme or reason in it. And that, if any, is the purpose of this book. If I can just get ten readers of this volume to looking at life a little more cockeyed, I shall not have labored in vain.

These autobiographical notes do not pretend to have

## BORN—ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE BED?

continuity, balance or consistency. They are the sporadic jottings of a man who would rather have been taking a nap than sitting up at a typewriter when he wrote them—in fact, I am not sure that he wasn't. When I gathered these fragments together, they, in themselves, seemed strange bedfellows. Another justification of the title of this book.

Mrs. Herold objected mildly to the title. "I am afraid, honey, that the public will get the impression that you are a philanderer, a roué—that it will think it is the story of your amours."

"Well, what if the public does?" replied I. "And the truth is that IT IS the story of my amours—of my loves—but also of my HATES—of my joys and sorrows, of my triumphs and my tribulations."

\* \*

*Christmas should be celebrated on the birthday of Jesse James.*

\* \*

*Simile: As refreshing as a new pair of shoestrings.*

\* \*

*To tell a funny story, tell the point and omit the story.*

\* \*

*Stupid people get the cream of life.*

\* \*

*No woman ever took a hint if it jeopardized her room and board.*



*Our local doctor approved, so my father and  
mother took me out for a walk on May 17, 1905.*

my career as an outdoor man

My father was an Elk, so I came naturally by my love for the great outdoors. Though I was born in 1889, it was not until 1905 that my parents first took me out of the house. I was a rather delicate child and they thought that fresh air and sunshine might do me some good. They had my best interests at heart, however, and did not take this step until they had first written to a newspaper doctor in Indianapolis. He did not get around to answering the inquiry until late the following spring, but when his answer was finally published, it was in the affirmative. At least, he said: "Try taking him outdoors and see if it kills him. Don't



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do this, however, until you have consulted your local physician." Our local doctor approved, so my father and mother took me out for a walk on May 17, 1905. That was the start of my career as an outdoor boy. That was the spring that Jenny Lind sang at the Haymarket Riots in Chicago.

People who see me now find it hard to believe that I was once frail. I have been asked a great many times to write the story of my physical self-development with the idea of encouraging others who start life with a scant allowance of natural strength. It is my purpose then, in writing this chapter, to prove that anybody can grow muscles and a love for trees.

My next outdoor adventure, as I recall it, was three years later, when I became interested in fruit-jar shooting. After four years of constant nagging I had finally persuaded my father to buy me a rifle. The first afternoon I got it, I plopped sixty-two glass fruit-jars which mother had stuck on the pickets of our back fence to sun. To top this accomplishment I had shot a few holes in a five gallon lard jar which was resting in the back yard with its target end pointed my way. It was glorious sport to sit on our back porch and watch the glass of the fruit-jars splatter. I can smell the powder now, and the tang of the spring air, and I can feel the welts that father left in our discussion of the episode when he arrived home later that evening. I know them well, welt by welt, and although I added a few more permanent souvenirs to my welt collection in a college fraternity initiation some years later, I can put my finger on father's. Those acquired later were barrel-stave



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and bed-slat welts, and those who have gone in for welt collecting know that there are welts and welts.

I have a dim recollection of a game of marbles in 1909, and I think it was in the fall of 1910 that Carl Eveleigh inveigled me into a game of football in his



backyard. Paul Davis stepped on my Adam's apple and I gulped queerly for a couple of months and did not go outdoors again for two years. It was somewhere along there that I played a game of shinny with a tin can and got such a crack on the shins that I was for a year or so temporarily discouraged with outdoor sports. In high school, nevertheless, I played Launcelot Gobbo

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in a short scene from *The Merchant of Venice* which our English class gave one Friday afternoon, and I took some dandy kodak snapshots of a game between our football team and that of the Linton, Indiana, high school. So it will be seen that I was gradually heading for the real outdoor life.

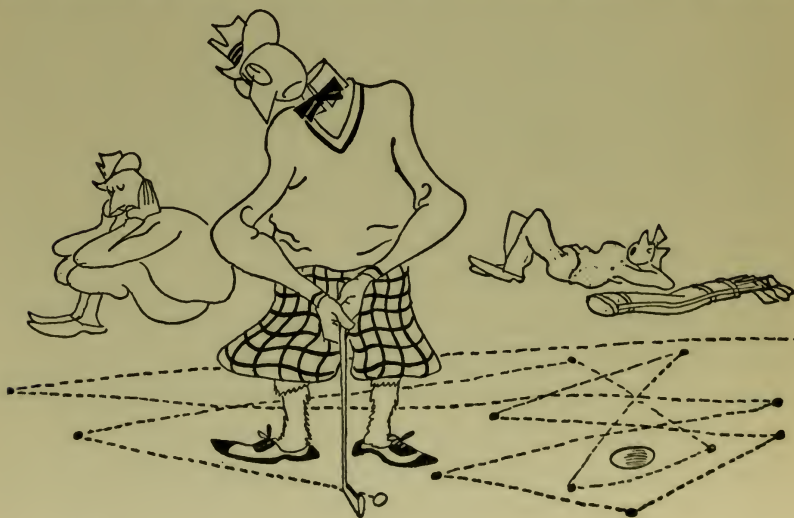
In college, I went in for outdoor beer parties in the woods adjacent to our fraternity house. A number of our boys and a team from the Phi Psis would go in together in the evening and buy a few dozen bottles of beer and put them in a washtub of ice water. This is good exercise for the back of the neck, if you have a weakness there, and I did. In college, I realized that I would have to struggle assiduously against my natural tendency to be a little wee bit, shall I say, bookwormish. In my Junior year I bought a gym suit and played half a game of basketball; but, once again, somebody put his knee on my Adam's apple, and I was, once again, out of athletic sports for three years, until I was well along in business life in Indianapolis. My chief enjoyment in those days was big, black cigars. My employer did not like cigarettes and I was more or less forced to smoke cigars, but I finally became very fond of them. Now and then I went to a burlesque show. The day before Christmas, each year, a jolly crowd of us would gather for lunch in the Claypool Hotel, from 12 o'clock noon until 12 o'clock midnight. Of course, I can hope to hit only the highlights of my outdoor career.

It was in this period that I took up golf in a serious way. Lee Nelson was conducting a golf school on the

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top floor of the Hume-Mansur Building, now the Hume-Mansur Building, and Sam Garber and I used to go over to Lee's at the noon hour and hit a lot of practice balls. I must have hit 35,000 golf balls that winter, and I intended to play a lot of golf all that coming summer. I did play one ripping game with Herman Deupree and we resolved to play at least twice a week the rest of our lives. All I could do was drive, and my drives were wonderful, but it took me about fifteen approach shots and putts to reach each hole, so my score that day was nothing to write home about.

Shortly after this I moved to New York, and it was four years before I felt again the call of God's great outdoors, and I accepted an invitation to play golf with George Matthew Adams at the Montclair Golf Club. I told George that I was no good, but he did not believe me until we were halfway to the first hole. I played





## MY CAREER AS AN OUTDOOR MAN

bareheaded and got such a sunburn that I did not play again until a couple of summers later. So you will see that I have had my downs as well as my ups in outdoor sport, and I hope that you are beginning to get the lesson I want to give you, *i. e.*, that it does not pay to quit, even though things may seem pretty dark at times. I was in New York ten years, and seriously considered joining the Gramercy Park Squash Club, the New York Athletic Club, the Morningside Tennis Club, the VanCourtlandt Skating Club, the Siwanoy Golf Club, and the Bedford Riding Club. I remember that at one time at The Players', Herb Roth told me about a gym class to which he belonged, which was a sort of training school for policemen, and that he wrestled policemen three times a week, and I entertained the idea of getting into this. Fred Farrar recommended brisk walks, and I did take a brisk walk in 1924. Swimming is said to be the best all-round exercise there is. My daughter Doris, now nine, is adept at it now, though she struggled timorously with water wings for the first six days. It shows what stick-to-it-ive-ness will accomplish in sport as in other walks of life.

In the spring of 1925 I decided to take up golf again, and I hauled out my old golf bag and shook a lot of umbrellas and rabbits out of it, and took it up to Alex Taylor's to have the club heads polished. Four of the shafts were crooked, but I gladly paid for the installation of new shafts, because one of my mottoes in all sports has been that the workman is worthy of his hire. I mean that you cannot expect to play a top-notch game with second-rate tools.



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A year later we moved to California for a while and Mrs. Herold took up horseback riding. This is one of the most enjoyable of all outdoor pastimes, and there are marvelous trails in California for those who love it. Don't tell anybody, but horseback riding is one of the best ways in the world to reduce, and, also, it offers the enjoyment of that *entente* between horse and rider which is such a consolation to those with troubles of any sort. Mrs. Herold fell off of two horses—at different times—but she went on and on, in the equestrian art, until she can now ride excellently.

I am keeping up my golf lessons with the same enthusiasm with which I started them fourteen years ago. Golf is a game which one can never totally master—especially if one never plays it. Every few weeks I go up and take a series of lessons from Jock Adams, and then I turn temporarily to some other interest, just long enough to forget all that Jock has told me, and then I go back and start all over again.

If I have done anything unusual in sport, it is because I have persevered. My athletic career is not so remarkable for any medals that I have won or for any records that I have piled up, but, I should say, for the persistence with which I have followed it. My career as an outdoor man is not so wonderful *per se*, but it is rather unusual in that I have come back to it again and again. I may have spent most of my life indoors, but one thing I could always count on and my public could always count on was that the passing of another decade would find me outdoors again—out there again, with blue skies above me and green grass below.



### celebrities i have known

We had a better brand of celebrities in Bloomfield than they have in New York. They were more to the manner born. Their personalities seemed to come as less of a surprise to them. And another thing, and perhaps the most important item of all—they had nothing to sell. They were as natural as birds in trees and as honest as cows in a pasture. None of them made any money out of being what God made him; they all just enjoyed being who they were, and they had no idea that they were being who they were. How different from the famous New York artist that I know who wears red bangs across his forehead, and who does it deliberately for trade-mark purposes, as deliberately as a corporation decides on a design for a patent-medicine label. Personality is planned and is played like

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poker and is made to pay on Manhattan Island. Bloomfield personalities grew like flowers and weeds.

I am not condemning my New York artist friend for wearing red bangs. It costs more to live in New York than it does in Bloomfield and there are seven million people there instead of two thousand, and it is therefore more difficult to stand out. I commend business sagacity, and I have much more admiration for a man who survives than for one who starves, and if blue whiskers were necessary to that end, I would endorse blue whiskers. In fact, I, personally, am bald-headed largely for business purposes. I sign my drawings with all lowercase letters, a pure affectation, for commercial and trade-mark purposes. All I am saying is that my taste for celebrities runs to the Bloomfield variety rather than to the New York species. And when I say Bloomfield, I refer to Bloomfield in the sense that Bloomfield typifies thousands of small towns all over America. To the swells who think that all the romantic personalities in the world are concentrated in the artists', and authors' and actors' clubs of New York, London, and Paris, I wish to say that picturesque people are myriad in this world, and unless you have lived in a small town you have not really known the real ones.

I am, in the main, stating the argument for amateur personalities in general versus professional personalities in general. I do not doubt many of the celebrities I know in New York were once genuine articles as characters in their small home towns back in Ohio or Illinois, but soon after they came to New York they lost their amateur standing and began to sell their native



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flavor. But Punch Fuller, carpenter and photographer, of Bloomfield, was Punch Fuller because he was created Punch Fuller, and not because he desired to be more Punch Fuller than Bob Hayes, the town bill-poster, was Bob Hayes. There was no thought of personality rivalry in Bloomfield, and certainly there was no thought of monetary gain out of personality. Per-



sonality was not a trade trick in Bloomfield, not a phase of merchandising scheme. I have seen the routine of making and selling fame in the Big Town, and I am sorry to have lost Bloomfield where folks were folks for fun and not for profit. Pirie MacDonald is a better photographer than Punch Fuller was, but I doubt that he is a better guy. They say Pirie obtains part of his effect by blowing cigarette smoke between his subject



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and his camera; I wonder if this is necessary, or if it is hooey, a phase of the Pirie MacDonald flourish and legend. Punch got three dollars a dozen for his pictures; Pirie, I believe, gets six hundred dollars a dozen for his. Well, he ought to. They are that much better than Punch's. The trouble with Punch was that he could never decide whether he wanted to be a carpenter or a photographer. One week he was one and the next week the other. For many years he had a temporary knockdown studio on a vacant lot on the east side of the courthouse square, but you never could trust his office hours. He might likely as not be out putting up a woodshed for Marshall Davis, the blacksmith. Father afterwards bought Punch's studio for fifty dollars and we had it in our back yard for many years, for the lawnmower, wheelbarrow, washtubs, bicycles, etc. This was before the day of garages. Punch moved to Terre Haute.

Sometimes he came back to Bloomfield and renewed mock hostilities with me. For fifteen years, there was between Punch and me (an idea of his in which he persisted) a discussion of a contemplated battle of the century. Every time I saw him he had something to say about some new boxing gloves he was about to get, with which he was going to knock me cold. Sometimes horseshoes or other boxing glove stuffing entered into the conversation. This never became an old joke to me; in Bloomfield we gave our gags years of time in which to ripen; we knew nothing then of bromides and sulphites; we grew comfortable in repetition of old jests; bromides were the spice of our life. There

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is, under this banner, a dependability in people; I knew when I saw Punch Fuller a block away that I could count on some crack about his putting on the gloves with me.

Some of the other big men of Bloomfield were:

Asbury Haines, barber. Life was a continuous lark for him, yet he has been in one shop for about twenty years, is a good family man, and has saved considerable money. Nobody ever came into Asbury's shop with low spirits and kept them very long. He always had copies of *Puck* and *Judge*, and he could draw pretty well himself. The last time I was in Bloomfield he took me down to his house to look at some drawings his son had made, wondering if the boy could become a comic strip artist.

The Knapp boys, Ed, Pat, and Bob, who ran the other barber shop, were live wires, too, and the Knapp barber shop was one of the intellectual centers of the town, in which I, as a kid, could always satisfy my craving for sophisticated banter. The father of these boys, Cal Knapp, was at seventy one of the sprightliest souls I have encountered in this world. He ran a cabinet shop, was stone deaf, had cartoons pasted all over the inside of his establishment, and simply doubled up over a joke, whether he heard it or not. And it didn't have to be a new joke. Cal Knapp was out for the fun there is in life, and it didn't keep him from being a marvelous cabinetmaker.

George Shryer was the town sign painter, and he let me fill in his blacks, sometimes. He had thousands of cans of paints sitting around. The biggest things he

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did in Bloomfield were a festoon of grapes around the dining room of the Elmora Hotel, and a big sign on the road to Worthington with cards of all the Bloomfield merchants on it. He later became an interior decorator in Los Angeles, Cal., and now has the Hudson and Essex agency in Modesto, Cal. He was a fine, gentlemanly, romantic person, with time to play. He directed the high school shows, and was responsible for giving to one of the Hallowell boys the part, in one of our productions, of Grim, senior member of the firm of Grim and Gruff, dead ten years before the opening of the play.

Bob Hayes and Bollivar Norvell were in and out of town. Bob went out now and then as advance man and billposter for a tent "Tom" show, and Bollivar, I believe, took a job once in a while as a clown with some small circus. When they were home, it was great sport to sit with them in the shade of Irions' chicken house on a summer afternoon, or in the back of Cavins' drug store on a cold winter night, and listen to tales of adventure in Davenport, Iowa, or some other magic city. Much more lovable these than gentlemen of the drama with whom I came in contact later in New York. Often, at the Mask and Palette Club, I have had the impulse to slough some celebrated English actor, making every move a picture and every word a symphony, at my elbow at the bar or at an adjacent table in the smudgy dining room.

Even drinking was different among the Bloomfield immortals. New York celebrity drunkards drink largely to feed their conceit, while Bloomfield drinkers



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drank for the glow that liquor is intended to yield. There were Lew Clark, and Harry Hatfield, and "Col" Ratting, and many others—all poets, all picturesque, all sincere souses. When Lew Clark said, "Get me drunk, boys, and have some fun with me," he approached his liquor in a beautiful spirit, and a man who sold stove wood for \$1.50 a cord, delivered, had a right to go on a frequent bust, say I. Harry Hatfield sometimes took off all his clothes in Jones' wood when deeply under the influence and he sometimes wound up in the county jail, but he had rich and mellow moments in earlier stages of his inebriations and afforded the town much color and mild entertainment. I remember "Col" Ratting particularly during one of the Bryan campaigns, for, after a few drinks, he always donned a silver plug hat, later squashed by an overripe cantaloupe dropped by a contemporary from an upstairs window in the Dugger Block.

I thought, as a boy and as a Sunday school pupil, that these men were all doomed, but, even so, I caught enough of their romance to last me all these years, and I feel much reverence and respect for them now. They were gentle rebels, sassing their destinies somewhat, with that audacity which I now feel is perhaps the greatest thing in life, and refusing to conform to the dead, dull mould which cut-and-dried civilization of Bloomfield of that day would have prescribed for them. Of course, I thought Pete Kidd and Lew Kidd, saloon keepers, were bound straight for hell, but I have found in later years that they were kindly souls, harmless and guileless, just a couple of big boys trying to



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get along, with no sinister intention of reddening drunkards' stomachs as per the plates on our schoolroom walls of that day.

Other outstanding personages of my boyhood in Bloomfield were:

Pete Lewis, pool room proprietor, who made the famous remark, upon receiving and inspecting a new set of billiard balls, "Well, they're all right if they'll stand the durability," and who later combined fur buying and selling with his pool room business. But Bloomfield pool players were not a highly sensitive set, nasally or otherwise. A skunk skin or two in a country pool room does not change things much. When I drifted to New York and came back to Bloomfield on visits, Pete was always interested in the fur center around Twenty-Eighth street, which I passed on my way to the old *Judge* office.

John VanScoyt, the town blind man, spent hours daily, patting down dirt basins around the trees in front of his house, to catch the rain, and I made up my mind that if I ever became blind I should pass my time that way—not a bad thing to remember these days when there is so much magic lantern alcohol in pocket flasks.

Alvadore Quillen kept the rear room of *The Bloomfield News* the cleanest print shop in Southern Indiana and made *The News* perhaps the best looking paper typographically in any town of two thousand in the United States, and he led the Bloomfield band and smoked a corncob pipe—because he wanted to smoke a corncob pipe.

## CELEBRITIES I HAVE KNOWN

Sam Shertzer painted the court house tower and was to Bloomfield, for weeks thereafter, what Lindbergh is now to all America.

Homer McKee went to Indiana University winters and worked in Stalcup's dry-goods store summers and gave me drawing lessons at fifty cents each. He was later cartoonist on *The Indianapolis Star* and now runs an advertising clinic in Indianapolis.

These and others were the celebrities and the heroes and the grand and glorious of Bloomfield, and they were all wool and a yard wide, whereas I fear there is much shoddy in the celebrities I have known more recently in New York City. My newer acquaintances are conscious of their silhouette on the club stairway, or of their cocktail stance, or of their powers as *raconteurs*; they put a little too much English on their self-assertiveness; they compete a little too hard at anecdote; they know a little too well their Southern France; they mix their salads with a little too much gusto; they intonate; they are busy being personalities. Many of them do good work in their work shops, and many, it is true, retain an easy-going small-town natural manner without attempting to retain an easy-going small-town manner. There are real guys everywhere, but real guys have a better chance to be real guys in Asbury Haines' barber shop than they have in the Mask and Palette Club. Not one per cent of the "who's" in America are in *Who's Who in America*.

\* \*

*Pasadena (Cal.) lecture course halls are heated by high blood pressure.*



my first dog—and some later ones

In 1899 I saved up two dollars for the Bloomfield street fair. This promised to be the biggest thing in my life since LaPearl's circus the previous summer. The first day of the street fair, even before Patsy's crackerjack was ready and the little black tent was set up for Lunette, the Flying Lady, I bought a dog with my two dollars.

I had earned the two dollars painting the iron fence around our house. My father was the town banker, and we had an iron fence. I was to have had a dollar and a half for the job, but about the fifth day when father locked up the bank and came home at noon for dinner, I was crying into the paint bucket. I realized that the town banker had got me into a bad bargain.



## MY FIRST DOG—AND SOME LATER ONES

It was a long fence and it was worth more than a dollar and a half to paint it. Father raised the ante to two dollars.

The night I brought the two-dollar dog home was a big, historical night in the Herold family. It probably meant more than any other night in our family legend except the three nights on which we three children were born, and the night father was so sick that the doctor decided he would have to go to Battle Creek.



Mother realized what it would mean to have a pup in the house, and she was not entirely in favor of it. My sisters were interested. Father was as much for the dog as he could be without openly opposing mother. And father and I both sensed a tragic phase of the situation. It was the first day of the street fair

and I had spent my two dollars. But father later relieved my financial difficulties without injuring my dignity or making me feel entirely too easy about my financial lassitude. Father had a roundabout way of being gentle in such matters. I recall that the first job I ever held was setting type and writing local squibs for *The Bloomfield Democrat*, one summer, and I heard



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years afterwards that father had agreed with the editor to pay my salary in case I did not earn it.

That first night was a sleepless one for the entire family. We agreed to name the dog "Flirt." She was a tiny black-and-tan terrier, and, at that age, about the size of a mouse. We put her in a piano box in the back yard and went to bed with our ears as big as Magnavox horns. In about five minutes the concert started. That mouse-sized dog made that piano box resound for a mile in every direction. Most of the family gathered in nightgowns in the upstairs hall and held a conference as to what to do about it. Mother was for taking the dog back the next day. Finally we agreed that we would have to let the dog cry it out. After two or three such nightie conferences, father and I sneaked downstairs and went out and looked in the back yard to see if everything was all right, and to offer soothing words. This did not lessen the howling after we returned upstairs.

"Flirt" sweetened our family life for many years. I can remember, now, the thump of her tail on the leather couch in the dark living room when I came home at night during my high school period. I can remember how the family hovered over her breathlessly for an hour or so the evening I accidentally hit her with a club in a game of shinny. She pulled through.

After I went to college, she became father's inseparable companion, accompanied him to and from the bank, morning, noon, and night. Father was the town's hard-boiled egg, could name the day two or four years

## MY FIRST DOG—AND SOME LATER ONES

ahead when So-and-So was going to go into bankruptcy, but he was all tenderness in family matters. Earlier he had permitted me to run an art store in the front of his bank, the same consisting of a large cigar showcase full of pictures cut out of magazines. Rather than deny me this whim he permitted himself and the bank to be made to look a little bit foolish in the eyes of the whole town. The town in that case could go to hell, was his attitude. And he stuck to "Flirt" for many years after I went away to Indiana University. Twice a day, that little toy dog and he tramped back and forth between home and the courthouse square.

A boy gets a dog into his soul when he is a kid, and when he grows up he has to try to repeat the thrills. Thus all of us adult guys have to have, sooner or later, our second childhood's dog days.

My dog desires were dormant for many years, but they came out with a fury about four or five years ago. This time they were not for two-dollar dogs, though they might as well have been. This time my affections for the dogs were ramified by a technical interest in the species. Dogs of one's second dog days have parents, yea ancestors, and diseases, and points. There is a lot of bologna to the dogs of one's second dog days. We plotted to have a puppy in Doris' stocking on Christmas morning, and this involved much preliminary research and study. For two weeks I haunted bird stores and studied the dog sections of the more snooty magazines. Finally it was decided that a wire-haired terrier was the breed we wanted, and on Christmas morning "Fun" wobbled across the living room trail-

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

ing one of Dordee's stockings, and all Christmas day Mrs. Herold ran around the house with a blotter. I was off on my second childhood's dog days. The dog was Doris', and the work was done mostly by Mrs. Herold, but the passion was mine. "Fun" was "Flirt" all over.

Then one day, a couple of months later, they phoned me "Fun" was dead. He had eaten the wool hair off of one of Doris' dolls and had thrown a convulsion and broken a leg and the veterinary had been forced to kill him.

That night I said we would fill that hole in our home without delay, and the next day I bought two new wire-haired pups, "Punch" and "Judy."

Within a couple of weeks I became suspicious of them. I had begun to know a bit about wire-haired terriers and I suspected that "Punch" and "Judy," though they had cost thoroughbred money, were not as thoroughly bred as they might be. Again I began to haunt bird stores and one evening I saw the wire-haired terrier of my heart and bought him impulsively and brought him home sheepishly in a basket. Mrs. Herold lets me weather my insanities to the end, and she laughed this off. This made three dogs in the home, but why not? I bought two large Victrola boxes and put chicken wire and doors on the front of them, and we kept them, not in the garage, not in the basement, but in the library just off the living room. I'll come to no good end in this world. I have been surrounded with too many tolerant and overindulgent persons. Our



## MY FIRST DOG—AND SOME LATER ONES

house became virtually a dog house. About all we got done each day was to change the papers in the Victrola boxes. Well, why not? We are children only two or three dozen times in this life.

We let Doris name the new dog and she called him "Chowser," which is a sort of chop suey of several good dog names. We eventually got rid of the other two dogs—one of which turned out later to be about as far



from a wire-haired terrier as a dog can get—and "Chowser" lived with us for several years and was all right. He bit a child now and then, but it happened that he usually chose Christian Science children, so no harm done.

We moved back into the heart of New York City. I became one of the leaders of New York—one of the dog leaders. Many is the rainy night I have gone out around Gramercy Park with an umbrella in one hand



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

and "Chowser" in the other. When Hildegarde arrived, we decided that it would be too much to try to raise a baby and a dog in the same house and we weighed their comparative merits and decided to get rid of the dog.

Did you ever try to give away an expensive, high-bred dog? You can dispose of a mutt in a jiffy, but if you have a dog worth perhaps hundreds of dollars, nobody seems to want him. Or if they take him, they bring him back.

I first tried him on Jim Cushing. But as soon as "Chowser" arrived in Stamford, he and all the Cushings and all the servants developed nerves, and "Chowser" bit a laundress or a laundress bit "Chowser," or Mrs. Cushing bit Jim, or something, and the next day they motored back in state and returned "Chowser." After two or three other similarly abortive attempts to dispose of him, we finally decided to call in Dr. McGarvey, our family physician, and put up to him, as a professional problem, the task of finding a new home for "Chowser."

A few days later a good-looking man came and took "Chowser" away to Asbury Park in a 1915 Marmon, and we have nev—vah seen him again.

\* \*

*After this Life, Nothing will probably seem like Heaven.*

\* \*

*Dost thou love life? Then squander time, for squandering is the stuff life is made of.*

## bloomfield notes

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In Bloomfield, when I was a boy, it was a novelty for anyone to get shaved through the week.

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A country court house gets used a lot in figures of speech. There is always at least one man in a county seat who has the reputation of having drunk enough whiskey to float the court house.

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When the livery barn burned at Bloomfield, the local paper said, "The long expected happened early last Saturday morning."

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Uncle Jakey Hoffman did not get anything done the last twenty years of his life except have hay fever.

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If there is anything that rings false it is a country town newsboy.

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Everybody in the neighborhood knew when we were going to have chicken for dinner, and we knew when the Moffets or Welches were going to have chicken. There would be a great squalling and scampering in their backyard, and then a more or less isolated cry of anguish on the part of one particular spring fry—then

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

a muffled silence—then more silence—death—and a pile of wet feathers.

Sometimes father killed our chickens, sometimes mother; sometimes they teamed. Father always used the hatchet when he could find it, and there was a special hacked and feathered two-by-four in the barn-lot for this purpose. Mother more often braced herself on both feet out in the middle of the back yard and wrung their heads off. Then all the children would have to run like sixty to get out of the way.

Then mother would souse the chicken in a black kettle full of boiling water and unrobe him of his feathers. Any little feathers that stayed on would get burned off later with a piece of newspaper.

---

In the country, pumps are personalities. Rusty iron pumps that put a sprinkle of rust into every cup of water. Wooden pumps with the croup. Pumps that groan, whine, cough, sneeze and snore. Pumps that sing a siren symphony. Not plumbing—but pumps!

Pumps comment. They opine.

And sometimes—pumps die—deaths—like people. And stand dead and limp—their own monuments—and people give them a drink of their own water to bring them back to life—and it works for a while—then the pumps die dead.

After a life of service—of ministration—they die dead—of overwork—of exhaustion.

And people are sad.

And, after a while, comes a new red pump—a new iron pump from the city, with improvements—but



## BLOOMFIELD NOTES

something is missing. It takes years of service for a pump to get a soul—and bright red paint and modern improvements mean very little to a country pump.

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In Bloomfield it was quite an event when anybody dug a cistern or a cellar. Sometimes it even got into the weekly paper. There were always five or six people sitting around watching and lending their moral support when anybody dug a cistern or put up a chicken house in our town. It was a slow and important and weighty procedure. There was one old man, especially, who spent most of his time at cistern and cellar diggings. When they put brick streets in our town he was present when every brick was laid. When George Kidd put up his undertaking shop, this old soldier was present from excavation to roof.

There is a good deal to be had out of digging a cistern or basement, and in our town we always made the most of it. There is the smell of fresh earth, the clean, slick marks of the spades, the slow rhythm of the diggers, who stop only to take a chew or mop their brow or take a drink out of a dipper. Or when anybody puts up a chicken house, there is the smell of freshly sawed boards and the music of hammer and nails. It is good to sit under the shade of a tree and watch a building go up.

But building and digging are so different in the big cities. Next door, for several weeks, we are conscious of a noise, a tiresome riveting comes to our ears in a vague way, and maybe some day, later on, we look out and another skyscraper is up. When they dig the great



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

basement they put a board fence all around it and shut off appreciators. The building gets up before anybody realizes it. There aren't any smells, there is just a blur of noise. Nobody sits around and watches every step. Somehow it seems wicked. It seems wrong for anything big to be built and all of the poetry of it lost to the world. Some day I am going to move back to my original home town and spend my old age watching cellars get dug.

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There is more Bohemia around the stove in a country grocery store on a winter night than there is in all the art hives of New York. In a country grocery store, everybody is comfortable and nobody is curling himself up uncomfortably on a lot of pillows trying to look comfortable. Everybody has been careless about getting his hair cut, but nobody has been consciously careless. There is good-natured, lazy, reckless, hit-and-miss conversation (and the same kind of tobacco chewing,) and not any affected drawling. There is some good, honest fatigue and relaxation, and no put-on ennui. There is genuine ease, no mock ease. And everybody is a worker by trade, yet nobody is talking about his "work." There are characters, not "individuals." There isn't any incense. Uncle Henry Hopkins' corn-cob pipe, full of long green, puts an honest aroma through the place, and he is smoking it because he likes to smoke it, not for the atmospheric effect. There aren't any candles—the coal oil lights make a pretty good Bohemian half-glow, and smell more than candles, be-

## BLOOMFIELD NOTES

sides. There isn't any rarebit, but there are cheese and crackers which are eaten quite informally.

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It is always a great burden off of somebody's shoulders when a country hotel burns down. The proprietor then has a chance in life. A small town hotel is a civic necessity. Somebody is always kind enough to run one in every small town. If it does not burn down, he runs it all his life. The carpets and wall paper keep getting thinner and thinner, and the grocery bills keep getting bigger. All that the hotel keeper gets out of it is the satisfaction that he is serving his country, and an occasional funny drummer story. His wife wears herself out, polishing coal-oil lamp chimneys and working in a hot kitchen. The family gets a place to live, and the hotel keeper keeps hope alive in his breast by praying that the town will strike oil or get a trolley-line or a canning factory and have a boom.

There are usually about four guests a day, at \$1.25 apiece, who sign up on the register and stick the pen into a potato or a glass full of bullets. With an overhead half as big as Barnum's circus, it is no wonder that a country hotel loses money. A horde of parasites gradually attach themselves to every country hotel and help eat it into bankruptcy. There is a fat boy who mops out, and a scrawny girl who makes the beds, and three or four fat help in the kitchen, and one kind of attaché and another. Through the winter there are a lot of regular checker customers who put coal into the stove just as if coal grew on trees.

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Get yourself born in a small town. Live there fifteen or twenty years. Then, the rest of your life you will have a proper basis for all your comparisons.

In the country and in the small towns, a lot of things are soaked with mystery and romance. There is wall paper, for example. In the country nobody thinks of wall paper as a commodity. Where wall paper comes from is as mysterious as where babies come from. One comes from heaven as much as the other. In the cities, wall paper is a commodity, a manufactured thing. We know it because we pass the factory on the way downtown on the street car. This takes the glamour out of wall paper.

When I used to read the funny papers in Haines' Barber Shop I thought that humor was spiritual, like wall paper and babies. Having moved to the city, I see it is a commodity like wall paper. I have seen funny columns being hammered out. I have discovered that Irvin Cobb is a factory. I have discovered that I, myself, am something of a factory. I have been to vaudeville rehearsals and seen that vaudeville is not made in heaven. I am glad I came from a small town because it showed me, once, the romantic side of all these things.

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Even if we have been across the continent we begin to feel at home the minute we have changed cars at Indianapolis and boarded the five o'clock train for Bloomfield. The five o'clock train is a social event. The people go up and down the aisles and shake hands. If you have a new wife, you begin to introduce her to



## BLOOMFIELD NOTES

the home town folks just as soon as the train pulls out of the union station at the big city. Everybody asks his neighbor what he has been doing "up to the city." Dr. Will has brought a patient up to the hospital for an operation, and the patient is getting along fine. Guy Humphreys has been up to visit the legislature. Mrs. Davis has been up to get a new rug for the dining room. Ella Yakey and Fay Marshall have been up to do some odd shopping. Ivan Stalcup is winding up his week's trip and is going home to spend Sunday with the folks.

In winter, the five o'clock train leaves the station red hot. At the first stop, all the doors are opened and the train gets icy cold. Sometimes it smells of peeled oranges, and it is always laden with bird-dogs, crying babies and bananas—but in spite of all this, it is the best train in the world because it takes you home.

---

Going back to Bloomfield at intervals of six months or so all my life has given me a slow motion moving picture of life and death. The camera is stopped often enough to catch the budding and drooping of human beings. Babies grow up before your very eyes, bloom, blossom, reproduce, and then begin to bend and fade, and finally die. It is an effect impossible to get if you stay all the time in one town, for you are then part of the picture. By going back to Bloomfield, every few months, I have seen the hour hand whirl.

\* \* \*

You people in little towns do not know how it hurts the "home boys" to come back and see what childbirth, rheumatism, pyorrhea, and diabetes are doing to you.



### my attitude towards sickness

Some of the pleasantest, dreamiest, most profitable days of my life have been spent sick in bed. Give me sickness and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous. I have, unfortunately, been well most of the days of my life, and there are very few of these dull days that stand out in my memory. It is the days that I have been sick that I remember—they shine like jewels on the dreary background of my past.

Now don't think I am one to subscribe to the old idea that sorrow and suffering are good for a person. I know many people who suffer for fun and for benefit. I have heard writers and artists and musicians brag about the sorrow they have had, and it has never impressed me. I would not go a block out of my way to get myself some sorrow or suffering, because I think there are plenty of other ways to develop and entertain oneself.

I regard sickness as a blessing, not as a blessing in disguise, but as an out-and-out blessing.

I love to look at the ceiling of a sickroom (providing it is my own sickroom—I admit I don't get the enjoyment out of other people's sickness that I do out of my own.) Never does the world seem so simple or the ceiling so charming. All of life's one million problems then, amount to practically nothing in comparison with the problem of getting well. In fact, most of the delight of sickness is in the fact that sickness is a one-problem proposition. All you have to do when

## MY ATTITUDE TOWARD SICKNESS

you are sick is to get well, and if you are sick enough you don't even have to worry about that.

To one whose chief income is now in personal production, sickness is an expensive luxury, and I enjoy expensive luxuries. I say to myself "It is costing you considerable cash to lie here in bed today and produce nothing." And then I sink back sweetly in my pillows and add, "But it is worth every cent of it."

And sickness gives us rest and perspective. It relieves us from the humdrum routine of life. If a man does not grow in value at the rate of about \$1,000 a day when he is sick in bed, he is not the sort of man for whom sickness was invented.

Authorities claim that anybody can keep well by taking ten minutes' exercise every day. But ten minutes a day is ten minutes a day. It amounts to 3,650 minutes a year, or over two days and a half a year—which is a lot of exercise. I would certainly prefer being sick in bed those two days and a half.

The next best thing to being sick in bed is being just well enough to get about, say about half sick. I try to keep trained down to this condition most of the time and am therefore in fairly good creative fettle most of the time. If I thought I could keep half well by exercising five minutes a day instead of ten, I would go in for it. But I know this exercise thing is so beneficial that I am afraid I would thrive on five minutes daily exercise, so I suppose I had better lay off of it entirely, except for exercise I cannot possibly escape, such as shaving, sneezing, sharpening lead pencils, filling my pipe, and shaking cocktails.

they send me away to college

In 1907 I entered Indiana University and spent the next six or seven years there, taking the usual four year course. As I look back on it now, I don't believe that college did me any permanent harm. On the other hand, college (or something) is probably partly responsible for the keen interest I take today in things intellectual and cultural, and the \$145 that my father spent to send me to Indiana was no doubt money well spent. Isn't there a slogan to the effect that there is no investment better than a boy?

Of course, I don't know that it was exactly \$145 that my father spent to send me to college, but to hear the old grads tell about board and room rates in the old days it must have cost practically nothing to put me through.

I am not sure just how long I went to college. I had a sort of slow, lingering graduation. I first began to graduate about 1911, and gradually graduated in fragments until I got a diploma along about 1913 or 1914. I have no idea who my classmates were because I don't know what my class was. There is nothing more embarrassing to me now than to go to an alumni dinner in the distant city in which I now reside, and find myself next to one of those dear, damned old fools who went to my college about fifty years ago when there



## THEY SEND ME AWAY TO COLLEGE

were about seven in the graduating class, and when graduation was a clean-cut matter, and have him ask me my class. I always answer, "Well, now let me see. Would you mind to pass me the cream?"

The reply is, "I'll pass you the cream pitcher, but I can't guarantee it is cream." I laugh heartily at this because it helps terminate our conversation on class distinctions.

At worst, college was, if nothing else, another sort of life for, let us say, five years, and that is something.

I want to get in as many kinds of life as possible on this earth, and college was one more kind.

Now, don't laugh this off, because I really think, don't you, that the ability to make a big change often enough to get over the fear of making big changes is one of the most important things we can learn. Or what do you have to offer? At any rate, next to sticking in one place and plugging along at one thing all your life until you get to be head bookkeeper at the brick plant or prosecuting attorney of Bush County, the best thing is to try something new every three or four years.

The way I got big like I am today (a member of the Life Extension Institute) was by making a big change of some kind every three or four years. Indeed, I have a lot more big changes to make in years to come, and the point is, I am not scared of them the least bit. This, according to my notion, is the way to get. Anyway, this is one system.

I try to reincarnate myself about as often as presi-

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dential elections, and, so far, it has worked pretty, whether you like me or not.

Well, there was college.

When I got out, there I was in the middle of life down at the bottom of the ladder again. It was necessary for me to get a job and to make my own living, and I didn't have any education on which to do it.

I had some culture, but I didn't have any education. I could look at a building and tell you whether the columns on the front of it were Doric or palæolithic, but that didn't help me any with the members of the Indianapolis Rotary Club, to whom I must now turn for a livelihood.

There I was. I was a freshman again, and I have since been a freshman again and again and again, until it is now second nature.

But I figured that I had been a freshman once and that it does not kill, so I went to it. I worked in one place in Indianapolis for three years, and then got the feeling that I ought to come to New York and start all over again. It was most painful to contemplate.

Then I came to the big city. I was once more a freshman.

Well, I have since made numerous changes, and have climbed and climbed until I am now a member of the Life Extension Institute. So convinced am I that the only way to grow is to try something new every few years, that only the other day I bought myself a pair of spats, just to prove to myself that a Bloomfield boy can do almost anything he sets his mind to.

And I say that all this courage for change, all this

## THEY SEND ME AWAY TO COLLEGE

recklessness with life, is based partly on the fact that college was something different for six or seven years.

College kept me from learning to draw—but I don't know whether this was a help or a hindrance. If I had gone to art school as I wanted, and had plugged along as a painter, I might today be one of America's great swamp artists instead of what I am (which I can't quite lay my finger on). I draw terribly and I write wantonly, but an old lady in Dubuque once wrote me that my quaint quips help her to bear her cross, so maybe I am of some use to mankind, or at least to old ladykind, after all. Bud Fisher and I.

Another thing college taught me was how to live a double life. This, too, I have found since to be quite necessary.

As I have mentioned, I wanted to go to art school. But my father wanted me to have a college degree like the smart men in Bloomfield that he knew.

"You will go to college or you will never darken my door again," he said. These were hard words, and I knew that Father meant approximately what he said, so I went. But I went saying to myself, "You can send me to Bloomington, Indiana, but you can not make me go to college."

I stayed at the fraternity house and drew pictures. The boys told me about their college life, but it did not interest me.

Eventually, of course, this had to come out. After a few months, the college and my father exchanged communications.



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

"Did you send your boy, Don, to our college?" the college wrote Father.

"Yes," my father wrote back.

"Well, he ain't here," the college wrote Father.

"That's strange," my father wrote back. "Are you sure he ain't there? Look again."

"Neither in body nor spirit," answered the college.

The outcome of this was that I really had to go to college.

"All right," said I, at the beginning of the second year, hurt, humiliated, bruised and broken, "I will go to your old college. I will go to college with one hand."

Then it was I discovered it is possible to live a double life. From then on, I never missed a class. I may have selected a few soft courses out of consideration for myself, but I made almost straight A's from then on.

But I *lived on the side*. I worked like a beaver on the college daily, the annuals, the magazines, the yearly minstrel shows.

I found it possible, in those several years, to do at one and the same time the thing you don't intend to do and the thing you intend to do. I learned how to be two-faced, and I have been two-faced ever since.

Since life (now that we are having a good frank talk) is largely a proposition of living one kind of existence when you want to live another kind, I thank college from deep down in my abdomen for teaching me how to live a double life. I'm much obliged to my alma mater for things she never knew she had in her curriculum.

I do not say that this is all college did to me.

## THEY SEND ME AWAY TO COLLEGE

It taught me to like to listen to the stomach rumblings of Old Thomas Carlyle.

It introduced me to Charlie Sembower, English prof, and the finest human spirit that ever flickered in flesh, (he came down to my room with tears in his eyes one afternoon to apologize for talking to his class for a whole hour about Don Herold when he was discussing, in one morning, the two poems, Don Juan and Childe Harold).

It taught me to drink beer. Beer was then the national drink of the working boy. Drinking beer is nothing to boast about now, however, since Duco has become the universal beverage of the college man.

It developed my vestibule singing voice on football excursion trains. (I like football because it enables the few to exercise for the many.) I have turned my vestibule singing voice to practical ends, and am now one of this country's most accomplished bathroom tenors. I never rent an apartment or house now with a bathroom larger than a Pullman vestibule. I know my range.

It taught me how to take a nervous breakdown or leave it alone.

It developed my sense of hearing. For years, when I lived in boarding houses, I could tell four doors down the hall whether or not there was anybody in the bathroom. This is still useful when my wife's relatives come to visit us.

It got me into a fraternity in which I found two guys to whom to marry my two sisters.

Now that I look back on college in perspective, down

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the vista of years, the only regret I have—I don't in the least regret the first rebellious year—the only real regret that I have is that while there I did not learn to play the trap drums.

\* \*

*Who knows but what we are just somebody's mud pies?*

\* \*

*Art is something to do, not something to talk about.*

\* \*

*You are a statistic to a doctor.*

\* \*

*New York: homes, homes everywhere, and not a place to live.*

\* \*

*I am not going to worry about the Destiny of Man, nor even about the Destiny of Me.*

\* \*

*Pistols for parents.*

\* \*

*Going to college was the easiest way I ever found of making a living.*

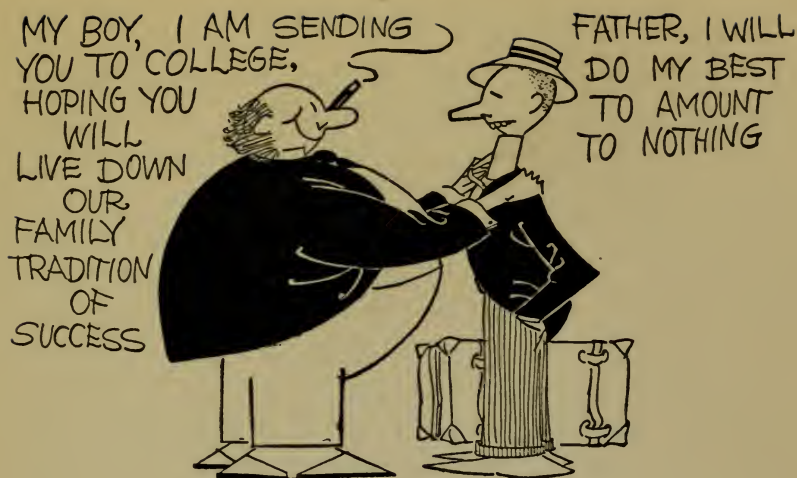
\* \*

*Matrimony—a woman's hair net tangled in a man's spectacles on top of the bedroom dresser.*

\* \*

*Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to conceive.*





### four years of waste

Are there still some colleges left which waste four years in the lives of their students, and if not, why not?

A ray of hope comes from Nebraska. Emmett V. Mann, a graduate of the university of that state, has written back to one of the student publications complaining that college wasted four years of his life. Let us hope he does not exaggerate.

There has been a lamentable tendency on the part of most of our colleges in recent years to educate. At the same time there has been a laxity in their efforts to entertain, amuse and pacify. I don't know of many good old-fashioned educational institutions which make a conscientious endeavor to unfit their students for life. Perhaps Nebraska is the shining exception. Perhaps it is still possible to go there and come out incompetent. The average up-to-date university today, however, turns out snappy and successful young pepperpots by

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

the gross. This is too bad. The news from Nebraska university is therefore cheering.

"It turned me out four years behind the man who did not go," wails Mr. Mann.

Why, Mister Mann don't you know there is no better way to be? You would not go to college and come out right up to the minute on everything, would you—well informed, well trained, and all that?

Pray each night that you may stay four years behind "the man who did not go." This is getting him right where you want him. Your danger is that your mind, improved by four years of neglect at Nebraska, may enable you to pass him in a few years.

The fundamental purpose of college is to set you back four years. Don't surrender the rare gift which you have had from dear old Neb. Did you get the wrong conception of your college courses? Don't you know they were merely meant to keep you quiet while the world got a little ahead of you?

Perhaps Mr. Mann has too many instincts of an incorrigible go-getter and should never have gone to college in the first place. There are some boys who can not be held down. Mr. Mann is only six months out of school and he is moaning to his alma mater that he is now confronted by a choice between two jobs, neither of which provides more than a living wage. He must have an overabundance of energy to get himself into this embarrassing situation. A choice of two jobs, either of which practically offers him affluence! Furthermore, he says it is impossible for him to carry out his desire to establish a home. This boy has too much

#### FOUR YEARS OF WASTE

ambition. He will be demanding a house and lot and triplets and a big sedan of his alma mater if he keeps up at this rate. Mann's parents gave him all the disadvantages of a college education and he muffed them. Well, from his point of view, he need not worry; he will succeed; he is the kind of chap who will hear opportunity when she knocks at his door—when he ought to have his mind on something else.

Mann suggests to his university that she hire a \$15,000-a-year man and put him at the head of a vocational department, interviewing every freshman and every senior and finally finding jobs for men who are suited for the jobs.

What for?

That would spoil everything.

If I understand universities, their chief function is (or was) to turn out misfits—men pleasantly out of place on this earth—picturesque to everybody, including themselves—hand-made individuals in a machine-made world. And Mann would have them fit!

Another cardinal advantage of a good college is that it is a place to go to escape from \$15,000-a-year (and up) men. Contact with such men is almost unavoidable in after life, but there is freedom from them in a good, one-horse college. Such colleges deserve great credit for this. With the cost of living doubled or tripled over what it was ten or fifteen years ago, it must have been a great temptation to all the colleges to raise the pay of their professors.

Mr. Mann's criticism of Nebraska University brings me gladness. I was a little afraid that all the colleges



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had, maybe, gone to the dogs and were turning out graduates who could smack right into step with the world and make things hum from the first and take the leadership in their home communities. (What we need is less leadership.) Mr. Mann makes me feel that there may still be a few schools where a well-meaning youngster can go and learn how to be good-for-nothing, where he can go and get at least four good years behind the procession, and from which he can graduate capable of shouldering some of the irresponsibilities of life.

\* \*

*Work is a form of nervousness.*

\* \*

*Women are not much, but they are the best other sex we have.*

\* \*

*I take no stock in epigrams, because I have made them.*

\* \*

*I don't know anything about eternity, but I want more out of this life than there is in it.*

\* \*

*The father of this country was Horatio Alger—not George Washington.*

\* \*

*There is no use going crazy just because it is the intellectual thing to do.*

\* \*

*I get everywhere early because I am always anxious to get away from the place previous.*

## my fried chicken policy

It was in 1909 that I decided to adopt a fried chicken policy and stick to it.

I decided that the issue of fried chicken could be met as squarely as any other issue. There is no use to sit and shake with indecision as the fried chicken plate comes your way.

In 1909 I decided on the leg as the piece of chicken I would take whenever the matter came up in my future.

The leg is a conservative piece of chicken. It is neither a neck nor a breast. It is a compromise between what you would like to have and what you are liable to take out for yourself if you get hysterical. It is a fairly good piece of chicken. Still there is rarely anybody in the room who will get sore at you for taking it, and a man is watched very carefully when he is choosing fried chicken, for we are all character readers at heart.

Furthermore, since there are two legs to chicken, I estimate that the leg is 100 per cent. easier to find than any other piece of chicken on a plate.

When one has his mind made up what he is willing to take when there is chicken, he can start to locate his particular piece long before it is his turn. Then when it arrives at his place he can make a quick, decisive jab

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and delay the dinner no more than an instant—instead of scanning the plate at length and making three or four false passes with his fork, muttering to himself and delaying traffic.

Generally I do not mean to prescribe the leg at all. Taste and temperaments differ. But I heartily recommend a definite predetermined decision of some sort or other. I have tried this plan since 1909 and find that it adds immeasurably to my social poise.

\* \*

*Many people pride themselves on getting by, who should only thank God.*

\* \*

*Use the gusto God gave you.*

\* \*

*Marital wretchedness is better than single blessedness.*

\* \*

*Writers sell their illusions in their youth and their disillusion in their old age.*

\* \*

*Only the bourgeoisie dress up.*

\* \*

*Never be sadder than the occasion requires.*

\* \*

*Jesus was a bachelor.*

\* \*

*If I had my life to live over I would be a trap drummer.*





*"You mean you folks don't play bridge?"*

*"No, we do not like the life."*

### how i became a bridge hater

At the age of ten I decided to devote my life to avoiding the game of bridge. My mother was the best bridge player in our town, so I had early opportunity to observe the dark side of the game. Mother was practically never at home and we children grew up without that mother-love to which all children are entitled in this world, and with no one to look after our teeth. To this day I have weak teeth as the result of mother's neglect of them in my childhood. And when mother did come home it was with some atrocious gee-gaw that she had won at the gaming table. Our home was full of bridge prizes and it looked more like a Sears Roe-

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

buck warehouse or a United States Cigar Store premium station than a home.

No wonder I learned to hate bridge.

One afternoon when mother was away somewhere with her cards, father was seized with one of his frequent attacks of ptomaine poisoning, and he exacted from all of us children what he thought at the time was a death-bed promise, that we would never touch a playing card for bridge purposes as long as we lived. "You have seen what it has done to our home," he said. "I beg you to abstain. If you must have your vices, I prefer that you become addicted to ptomaine. Yes, *that*, rather than bridge."

"As for me," I said to my father, in a trembling boyish voice, "I will say that you may rest assured, father, that I will never in all my life let ptomaine touch my lips nor bridge cards touch my finger tips. I hate bridge! I hate it!"

"Attaboy!" said father, and he was up and about in a few days.

Now and then mother would have her bridge friends at our house, and even as a child, I realized I did not like the type. I have become more tolerant as I have grown older; I now realize that not all people who play bridge are stupid, though I still maintain that some very stupid people are very brilliant bridge players. The fact is that, to-day, some of my best friends are bridge players. Not many of them, however.

As I grew older, the very avoidance of bridge became a much more fascinating game than bridge could ever be. As I approached the porthole and the thresh-

## HOW I BECAME A BRIDGE HATER

old of life I visioned that it was a daring and devious career I had selected for myself as a bridge avoider. If I could get through life and make a fair success in business and form a small circle of friends, and at the same time, escape bridge, boy, there was a program! There was a lifework!

Until one has thus allied himself definitely with the enemy, he little realizes how strongly the bridge forces are organized. Bridge gnaws at the very vitals of American life, and it is mighty hard for me not to become oratorical at this point. Society is organized to crush the non-bridge player and to ostracize him from its ranks. I know of no form of self-righteousness which can compare with that of the fairly capable bridge player. I have faced sneers and sneezes when I have mentioned my inability to play bridge and my lack of desire to learn. "What! You do not play bridge, Mr. Herold! Where have you been and why?"

"I have been right here all the time," I reply. "I do not play bridge," I add, if they insist, "because I do not like the usual bridge type, I do not like the life, I do not like the hours, I do not like bridge lamps and I do not care for the merchandise they hand out as bridge booty, and, furthermore, I have some very important tinkering to do in much more interesting fields, and, furthermore, I do not have to play bridge to convince myself that I have a modicum of brains, because I have already convinced myself of that by my acquirement of recognition of my work in pyrography, basket weaving and paleoethnology (if you know what that is), and furthermore, it is something of a sport to see



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

how long I can hold out against you people who are determined that I shall play bridge or burn."

I did not marry until I finally found me a girl who felt something as I do about the game of bridge. I have lost thousands of dollars worth of business because I wouldn't play bridge with prospective buyers; I have seen hundreds of inferior people give me that superior look when I told them I did not play bridge. I have suffered, folks, I have suffered.

But I am coming now to one of the most interesting parts of my memoirs. You will get a kick out of this. There was a period of a year or so when a certain group of people in a city in which Mrs. Herold and I lived at one time, who would not accept us entirely as non-bridge players, nor do us the kindness, quite, to cut us socially—there was a time when this group almost had me convinced that I couldn't play bridge because I wasn't smart enough. It was at this time that I decided to make a secret study of the game, just to fortify myself, if possible, against any such humiliating intimations. And I did. I went to the bottom of bridge, and I found it not very deep. In fact, in two weeks, I was, though no one knew it, one of the bridge sharks of the northern end of the state in which I then resided. In another week I was a wonder. Shortly after that, I started, just for the lark, to write authoritative bridge articles under the name of Milton C. Work. Perhaps you have seen some of them. I even decided to give some bridge lessons and I studied make-up under Lon Chaney, and developed a complete disguise, and have given bridge lessons to thousands of women. It has

## HOW I BECAME A BRIDGE HATER

become an intriguing pastime. At night you may play bridge with Don Herold, who does not, to all appearances, know one card from another, and who seems to squirm and suffer under your withering glances. The next day you may be worshipping, prostrate, at the feet of the great bridge master, Milton C. Work. It is then I laugh. For I—Don Herold—am the same. I am Milton C. Work.

\* \*

*Intellectuals should never marry; they won't enjoy it; and, besides, they should not reproduce themselves.*

\* \*

*God gave man work so he would not have time to think about saving his soul.*

\* \*

*Lord, spare me from sickly women and healthy men.*

\* \*

*A humorist is a man who feels bad but who feels good about it.*

\* \*

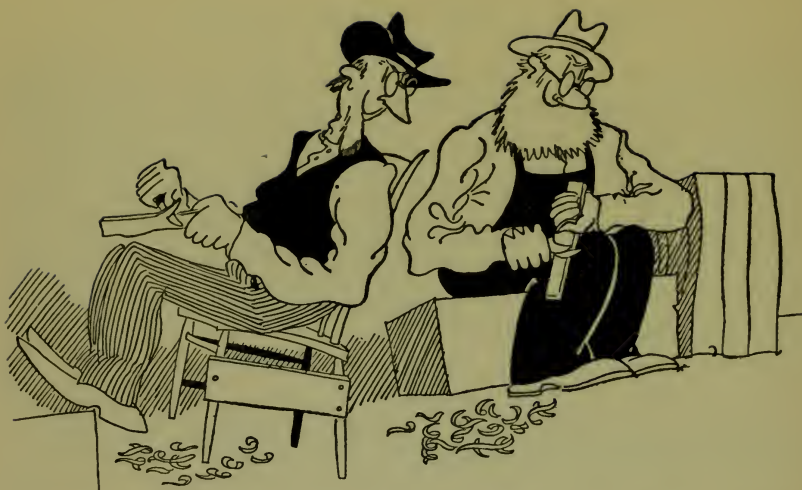
*There are more false teeth in Long Beach (Cal.) than in any other city of the same size in the world.*

\* \*

*Beautiful legs are disappearing because of high-heel shoes, says a famous chiropodist. Well, just so they last through my generation.*

\* \*

*All biographies are boresome to me until the grandparents are disposed of.*



*"I wonder how Bill likes his new government job at Washington."  
"Oh, he won't let that worry him much! He whittled with us  
here for twenty years and you can't teach an old dog new tricks!"*

### America—a whittle-ocracy

As a boy, living in a small town, I observed and knew whittling and whittlers, and, therefore, I understand our American form of government. We live in a whittle-ocracy. Whittling permeates our governmental life to the core, and all our governmental affairs are handled to the tempo of whittling. This country is run and ruled and regulated by whittlers.

In any deal that you have with the government it takes you only a short time to realize that the government places absolutely no value whatever upon your time. The government will drag out, through a period of years, a correspondence with you regarding some trivial matter, which might be settled between normal business men by the exchange of a couple of curt notes.



## AMERICA—A WHITTLE-OCRACY

It will outline for you the most devious, tiresome, bore-some, exasperating routine for the accomplishment of some insignificant business with it. For every dollar in money that you spend with the government, you spend \$5 worth of time. I may go to a Federal prison for this, but I can't keep still about it any longer.

And why all the slow molasses?

The climate of Washington, D. C., does not explain it all. Nearly every one admits that Washington, D. C., is the most enervating spot in the whole United States. Step off a train in Washington and immediately the blood becomes sluggish and insteps break and the feet drag. And the mind ceases to function. It is a paralyzing tropical climate, planned exclusively for beachcombers. Of all places for a national capital, our forefathers could have chosen none worse. Our capital should have been placed in the nippiest possible spot in all our land, somewhere where subzero weather would have bitten the shins of our governmental servants in the winter time, and where cool breezes would have kept them awake in the summer time. But even the opiate atmosphere of Washington, D. C., does not completely explain the drowsiness of most of our governmental chiefs and their aides.

What, then, is the trouble?

Whittling.

Get into an exchange of letters with some one in Washington concerning a \$3.11 item in your income tax, and after it has continued for two years you begin to wonder who this guy is who has nothing else to do in this world but bother you forever about so small a

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

detail. (If he had looked at your answer to question 73a, on page 11, of your 1928 return, the whole thing would have been explained to him in the first place). You wonder who this gentleman of leisure is, and how he got such an exaggerated idea of your spare time. And, finally, if you have grown up in a small town, as I did, you realize that you are up against a whittler. Your adversary is none other than Hank Whatshis-name, who used to sit (for thirty years) in front of the Star Livery Stable and whittle, waiting for a government job. His whole life up to the time that he went to work for Uncle Sam trained him to the belief that time is nothing. His job in the income tax bureau is the first job he ever had, and it is quite a surprise to him to be working at all. And though he has quit whittling physically, he still whittles mentally.

This may not be literally true.

Standards for governmental employees may be higher than they once were, but, nevertheless, a whittling tempo prevails in all functionings of the government. The whittlers of other days may have set the pace, but the pace remains about the same.

And this goes for most of the higher ups, as well as for the lower downs. Congress is full of whittling-minded men. In fact, we might all be better off if all our Senators and Congressmen were actually given jackknives and some pine boards and told to whittle instead of legislate. They would then create, at least, a lot of shavings and whittlings, which might be sold to the public at large for starting fires, and they might create some interesting and harmless doodads for the

## AMERICA—A WHITTLE-OCRACY

Smithsonian Institute. We would then cast our vote for the man who could whittle the best battleship inside of a bottle, and take the biggest bite out of a plug of tobacco, and do the best job of making a short story long. We would just herd a lot of these men down at Washington, D. C., and their only instruction would be to leave us alone.

The present activities of our whittling rulers are a ruinous drain on the resources of our nation. It costs only \$10 to trademark a knickknack, but it takes hundreds of dollars' worth of time to unravel the necessary red tape. It takes only a bit of pocket change to pay income tax, but it requires a lot of valuable time to penetrate the mazes of the present income tax return blanks. Our time taxes are a whole lot more serious burden than our money taxes. If some live wire in the Treasury Department could shorten by one-half the time required of our citizens for filling out their tax returns, it would be more of a blessing than the reduction by billions of the total tax required. And I speak as one who is fairly smart at figures. Think of those who aren't!

Another trouble is, that when a whittler gets a job in Washington, he feels that he must add to and uphold the dignity of the government, and if there is anything slower than an ordinary whittler, it is a dignified whittler.

\* \*

*Men like women; women like the institution of marriage.*



—then i married, in 1916

When a man marries, can openers come into his life.

All day long, as you go about your work, the can opener will scratch your heart a little.

Your wife is at home, perhaps plying a deadly can opener. Any minute it is liable to slip.

There are twenty fingers in your family now instead of ten. Ten of them you care more about than your own. There are just about twice as many square feet of human surface in your life as there were before—surface to catch bruises, surface for thorns and can openers. The enemy has twice as big a target to shoot at.

Marriage is a college for courage—and other things.

Well, a man is not much good until he has gone up against can openers of one kind and another.

\* \*

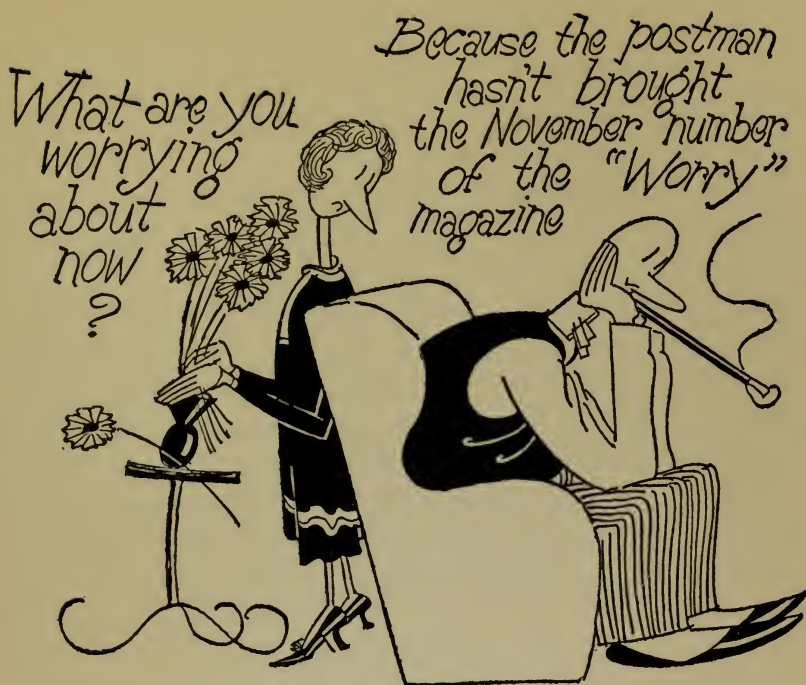
*It is but a few short years from diapers to dignity and from dignity to decomposition.*

\* \*

*Genius is an infinite capacity for giving pains.*

\* \*

*All the best people come from somewhere, possibly Bloomfield, Indiana.*



### why i took up worry

Worry has been a hobby with me since I was a little boy. In my sophomore year in college, I worried so successfully that I had a nervous breakdown—in fact, nearly went crazy. And at other times I have achieved high honors in the field of worry, and I think I may speak with some measure of authority on the subject. At any rate, I know as much about *worrying* as a lot of syndicated soothing-sirupers know about *not worrying*.

One thing I have observed particularly, if you are not doing your worrying, somebody else is. Most of the people who believe so strongly in serenity are simply letting somebody else take their irritations. If you see

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a lady riding along blissfully in a limousine without a worry in the world, it is pretty certain that somewhere there is a guy with two worries in the world. Just as most generous people are generous with somebody else's money, so are most serene people serene with somebody's else's serenity. There is a fixed quantity of worrying to be done in the world, and if you are not doing your fraction of it, somebody else is doubling up for you. There is no particular virtue in being philanthropic with money which you have gypped off somebody else, and there is no credit coming to you for being calm with a peace which you have plundered off some relative (most of our worry-thieving is from husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, ancestors, employees, or employers).

History has been made by worriers. Our civilization—such as it is, and it isn't much—has been built by people with a great capacity for the blues. We would still be in the Stone-Age if certain of our sourer Stone-Age ancestors had not been able to say: "I've got those Stone-Age blues." They worried us out of our oölitic lethargy and put us where we are today, in the Monoxide Age. Years hence, when we are all using flying machines, we will not have to thank those tranquil souls who now regard a flivver as the ultimate in locomotion, but those restless spirits among us who cannot tolerate terra firma. History is made by the nervous.

Fret your share.

Look around you. Even the current success magazines should admit that big successful executives are nothing more or less than big worriers. There would



## WHY I TOOK UP WORRY

be no sense in a large corporation's paying \$50,000 a year to a man to run a business that would run smoothly by itself. Sit near the desk of any high-salaried executive for a day and see what they bring to him. Do the underlings come in with pleasant tidings? No, they come in and tell him the worries. They let him know about the breakdowns, the leaks, the disasters. The things that run smoothly, run so smoothly that he never hears about them; he hears about the hitches. Annoyances in a business, in a family, or in a state, all gravitate upwards. A good-natured, imperturbable bookkeeper in a corporation office can be that way only because he is unconsciously paying part of his salary to an expensive executive higher up who is taking care of the real financial difficulties in the business while he, the bookkeeper, looks after the figures.

We hear it said again and again: "Most worry is unnecessary; do only the worrying that you have to do." This is a false and pernicious pedagogy. I say worry on the slightest provocation. Worry with the most slender justification. Worry when it is unnecessary so that you will be all the better prepared to worry when it is necessary. Practice makes perfect. It strengthens the worry muscles. Do not wait for the genuine crises of life; suffer a lot of imaginary crises. In short, do a lot of "shadow worrying" so that when you must step at last into the squared circle with a real worry, you will be nimble and quick.

I want to see worry institutes in all our big cities, and men honored with the degree of B. W. (Bachelor of Worry). I want to see worry made more democratic,

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made available to the masses. I want to hear a decrease in the "don't worry" bunk.

I would like to see somebody publish a "Calendar of Worry," with a worry suggestion for every day of the year.

They say—the paid pifflicators say: "Be cheerful."

Cheerful, hell! Nobody ever made any progress being cheerful.

But, just to show you how good a worrier I am, I haven't any faith even in *that*. Progress is nothing much. Most of the time I feel that progress is retrogression.

As a worrier, I may be a little *too good*.

\* \*

*Pleasure is more trouble than trouble.*

\* \*

*A man does not amount to much in this world until he begins to find celluloid ducks in his bath tub.*

\* \*

*I hope to die on a motorcycle, not in a rocking chair.*

\* \*

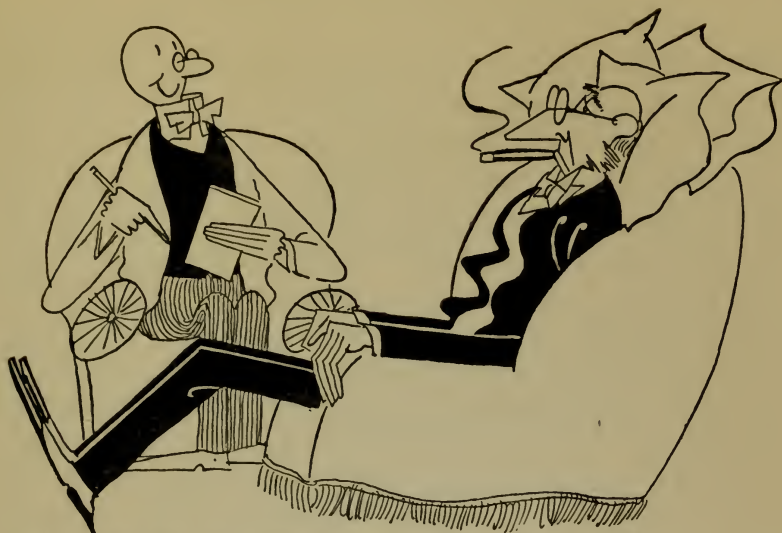
*On my deathbed, I hope I have enough philosophy to say: "I have been bored worse than this many a time at a \$3.30 show."*

\* \*

*Inscribe on my tombstone: "So this is Paris."*

\* \*

*All work, to me, is just like sitting in a dentist's chair.*



*"Did you ever try counting sheep for your insomnia?"*

*"Yes, and I wound up by organizing a big stockyard in Kansas City."*

one of the big men i have met

In my work as a writer it has been my pleasure and my pain to interview a large number of great men. One of my most disturbing interviews was with America's Big Man No. 1,938,241. (We are getting so many big men in this country that we are going to have to number them instead of calling them Rockefeller, Ford, Wrigley, etc.)

"I interview a lot of rich, successful men," I said, "and when I ask them to what they owe their success, they have to stop and think and make some wild guess. Now, no kidding, 1,938,241, to what do you attribute your success?"

"Insomnia," he answered with a moment's hesitancy. "I simply had to succeed. I couldn't sleep nights, and there was nothing else for me to do with this excess



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time. You know the old saying about two being able to live as cheaply as one, and what a lie it is. We all know that when two people get married their expenses immediately jump, not to double, but to from four to ten times as much as they once were for each of the contracting parties. Where was I? Oh yes. Well, the same principle works in insomnia. If you stay awake at night you have not twice as much wakefulness as the man who is awake all day and asleep all night, but six or eight times as much wakefulness. Insomnia wakes you up about six or eight times as wide awake as ordinary wakefulness. Therefore, having had insomnia all my life, I have been many times as wide awake as the ordinary man and have perhaps accomplished many times as much. I am not saying I am proud of it. But there it is—take it or leave it. Gosh, I'm sleepy!"

"Why don't you go to bed?"

"Bed!" he cried. "It wakes me up to go to bed. *I hate beds*, even if they have been the cradles of my fortune. I hate my fortune. I would give \$1,000,000 for a good night's loafing. I'm blasted if I don't build an electric-lighted golf course and play golf all night every night by myself, and sleep all day, and see if that won't put me back in the pauper class where I long to be."

"But you play golf nearly every day, now, don't you?"

"Sure, but so does everybody else. I can't get behind the procession just by loafing all day. If I play golf all day with three other fellows of equal intelligence

## ONE OF THE BIG MEN I HAVE MET

but inferior insomnia none of us gets anywhere, but we go home at night and they sleep, and I sit up in bed pop-eyed and make enough progress for six or eight men. That's why I go ahead by leaps and bounds while they stay right where they are in business. It was the principle of compound insomnia that put me where I am today."

"I should think that you might want to establish an Insomnia Foundation and perhaps an Insomnia Institute to give thousands of other young people a fundamental understanding of the cultivation and application of insomnia as a stepping stone to success. It seems to me you have hit on a secret of accomplishment that you might well share with many others. Of course, when I quote you in my article dozens of people will read it, but nobody will understand fully the significance of insomnia as you see it. What you ought to do is to build a lot of Insomnia Dormitories where the taunting specter of insomnia could walk undaunted for the benefit of the youth of our land," I said.

"You can't teach insomnia. It's a gift. If you aren't born with the knack for it, you can't learn it at any college. Of course, you can learn to stay up all night at a lot of colleges, but staying up and insomnia are two different things. As I say, insomnia consists in being wide enough awake for six or eight people. 'Early to bed, and stay awake 'til you rise will make you healthy, wealthy and wise.' And how do I know for sure that insomnia would work for other people as it has for me? Insomnia is no good unless you can get it to the rear wheels. I have the temperament. Insomnia makes me

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mad. I lie awake and make plans and say, 'Here comes another million,' and then I get sore, and that wakes me up, and then I find myself developing plans for another merger or something, and make another million. It's a vicious circle. There's hardly a night passes that I don't wake up wealthier than if I didn't go to sleep."

"But it might be worth trying on 100 young people."

"You might as well try to talk me into establishing an Institute of Indigestion. Some of my successful friends are where they are to-day because their stomachs have been on the fritz since early young manhood. But you can't say that everybody with indigestion is a success. Indigestion may be one man's meat and another man's poison, and so may insomnia. Gosh, I think a good attack of indigestion would soothe me to sleep and perhaps set me back \$100,000. I wish I had indigestion. It's funny how nature distributes her blessings. I might have had a life of peaceful unaccomplishment if I had been given indigestion instead of insomnia."

"What if you had been given both?"

"Well, I'd like to try it. They might have neutralized each other so far as their effects on my career is concerned, or on the other hand they might have worked hand in hand and made me twice as big a man as I am to-day. I hope the former. You call me a success. Well, I haven't succeeded because I wanted to. Success is a darn nuisance. Take my yacht—just a pesky nuisance—and it symbolizes success—it bores me to death. I'd rather go fishing in a \$2 rowboat. I don't want success. I just succeeded because I happened to strike a gold mine of insomnia, and I wish to God I hadn't."





### another interesting interview

Another unusual interview that I once had was with Donald Dummy, the actor, acknowledged by many to be the best of all motion picture dummies, the dummy who has stirred the souls of millions by his falls from precipices, his leaps from airplanes, his screen adventures under the wheels of chariots, trains, and such things?

What, if anything, is the real Donald Dummy like at home, off the screen? Has the man himself the same *allure* which distinguishes his work?

These were secrets the editor of a magazine told me

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to seek out for his readers. I was to peer into the very soul of Donald Dummy. "And don't take no for an answer," the editor told me.

After arranging for the interview with Donald Dummy's secretary, I called. As I was ushered into his presence, his personal maid carried out a hogshead of fan mail, and we were alone. It was twilight. Servants came with tea, and the two of us sat down comfortably, relaxed in the chintz comfort of a radiant California sun porch. A time for confidences, for questions, for digging down and stirring around the psychological depths. A maid came in. The fitter had come. He could wait. Family matters, bungalows, this, that and the other arose. But through it all, Donald Dummy retained that *allure* which we all love on the screen.

"You call me successful," he said finally, adjusting a fold in his apricot dressing gown. "But I am just beginning. I want to do big things. Everyone who is someone really wants to do fine work. You're always straining, reaching ahead toward the thing you haven't quite attained, haven't accomplished. So there is, after all, no such thing as success if it's always just ahead of you, is there?" And he laughed an endearing boyish laugh, or giggle. "Motion picture success is like a woman a man loves but never possesses. It is so fickle, so hard to grasp, always just beyond, beyond. Here today, there tomorrow."

There came a far-away gleam in his eye, a dream of things undreamed, a want for things wanted, a hunger which would always feed on hunger. The greatest dummy of them all, the dummy who has been pushed

## ANOTHER INTERESTING INTERVIEW

and kicked and tossed in some of the screen's greatest epics, was not happy.

Is this very yearning of his soul the secret of his strange *allure*?

We talked on far into the cooling California twilight, cooling yet warming, with that duality which pervades all nature in California which gives you what you want along with what you might think you don't want. Ah, California!

"I would like to marry. I want children. Some day I hope I shall marry. But just now it is one of the things I've had to sacrifice for this thing you call success." Just here, Mrs. Dummy and the two charming little Dummies came in, but walked out.

"My work and my studies take all my time. I have little time to devote to a family. But I do want a family some day."

I found then that Donald Dummy is devoting a great deal of time and thought to the development of a new system of metaphysical reasoning. Goethe said he never would have been Goethe had he not visited Italy. Donald Dummy is particularly adroit as a fencer, and for all his religious training, has about him a certain pagan ecstasy. And a stoicism that is sometimes impossible to understand. He has brown hair, soulful brown eyes, and brown canvas. It wears best.

"I must ever get more and more feeling into my falling; that is the thing for which I strive. Some there are who say that in my work the director is all, but a motion picture dummy with a soul can put that soul into his art, and no director can put it there for him. I do



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not, however, underestimate the work of good directors. Most artists are sensitive, sensitive as violins, and you can make them play with great feeling only when you realize this, and the greatest of the directors all know this. After all, a director should be like a great leader of an orchestra. He should be able to bring out the theme with the greatest dramatic intensity. And to get the best out of a motion picture dummy, the director must be dumb, dumb from the depths of his heart. There must be coördination between the director and the actor, an almost intangible something."

They say that when you watch Donald Dummy at work in the studio or on location, he is absolutely oblivious of time or place and throws himself wholeheartedly into the part he is playing. All great artists are like this, I believe—absolutely oblivious to everything.

Donald Dummy is magnetic, poised, impetuous, and has a rather hopeless touch of idealism which may be his only liability. He is eminently the type that women adore—restrained, fiery, self-contained, explosive, and always with that *allure*. Always interesting. A bit baffling.

"I want to make every part I play a delicate character etching," he confided further, watching his cigarette smoke curl to the azure California sky. Always mysterious!

The success he has gained has not turned Donald Dummy's head. He is still the same big boy he was when he first came to Hollywood. "I try to remember that after all I am just a bunch of straw and a piece of canvas," he chortled. "But you must see my children,"

## ANOTHER INTERESTING INTERVIEW

he remembered. "Oh, Dora," he called, and Mrs. Dummy, who is always waiting within easy gunshot, appeared again across the threshold with the two darling little Dummys who hope to follow in the footsteps of their father and mother and become motion picture actresses too. If blood tells, it will make them just that. For Dora Dummy was once one of the greatest female dummies of the silver sheet.

"Marriage, I believe, depends upon the woman very largely," said Mrs. Dummy. "We aren't quite modern enough yet to ignore the need of woman's time and work and thought devoted to marriage. Eventually of course, with women growing independent as they are, we will have to evolve an entirely new marriage relation, in which the husband and wife are equals. But that time hasn't come yet. The thing I like best in Donald's work is his repression. Through it all there is a current of spirituality. It is human. The work of some dummies is all canvas and excelsior, but Donald is, I think, a great artist. And he has a thorough knowledge of the box office. And he has *allure*."

Mrs. Dummy isn't old-fashioned exactly, but she isn't ultra modern, either, if you can guess what I mean between the two.

The Dummys go out seldom. Dinner parties at Ramon Novarro's or Clara Bow's or at Monty Banks' or Richard Dix's or Rod LaRocque's, or with other congenial friends. They entertain quietly now and then.

Donald Dummy is intensely interested in his children. Not as little novelties to be petted and indulged,

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

but as individuals to be considered and understood. He has a very sound knowledge of child psychology. The children worship him, not blindly in the usual child way, but intelligently.

The children, Mrs. Dummy, their home, the horses—all these human things that go to make up life mean a thousand times more to Donald Dummy than the ephemeral and questionable glamour of being the world's foremost moving picture dummy.

Donald says he hopes to end his days in a monastery. He is a very quiet man, and seems to observe life from the side lines rather than in active participation. You never see him at the Montmartre Wednesday noon or the Grove Friday night.

I am sorry I have neglected his smile so long. It is a very heart-warming and just-between-you-and-me sort of smile.

Once in a while you run across a man like that.

\* \*

*I would not care who made a nation's safety razors  
if I could make its blades.*

\* \*

*Russian dancers feel too good.*

\* \*

*BIG DAYS IN HISTORY: May 1, 1902—First  
electric light used in a bass drum.*

\* \*

*The arrival of talking movies will in no way affect  
my favorite motion picture actors, the horses.*





my \$80,000 teeth

Just recently I was complaining to a dentist, in my mild way, about a pretty heavy bill that he had sent me for work on three of my teeth, and he said: "You know that the life insurance companies say that a tooth is worth \$1,000. Looking at it that way, if I saved those three teeth for you, my bill was certainly reasonable."

It depends how you look at things. And I suppose this is exactly the right way for a dentist to look at teeth.

If I had no teeth and could eat nothing except soup, and could get no new teeth except by paying somebody

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

\$100,000 for a set, they would certainly be worth \$100,000, if I had \$100,000. Or if I were John D. Rockefeller, under the same circumstances, a full set of teeth might be worth a million dollars to me. But this makes it a little hard to decide where dentistry leaves off and blackmail begins.

If I were in this predicament and the dentist regarded my teeth as so precious, I might offer to make a down payment of \$200 on a new set, and give him a twenty-year first mortgage on the set for \$999,800.

But I think dentists should take certain things into consideration when they start to figuring teeth at \$1,000 each. Take my case, for example. I am now about forty years old. What about the forty years that I have already had my teeth? Don't I get credit for that? Say I am going to live to be sixty. It looks to me, then, that my teeth are worth, at the most, just about \$333.33 each, considering the mileage that is left in them. I imagine the life insurance company meant a new tooth, right out of stock, when it said \$1,000.

There ought to be some place where we could go to have our teeth appraised now and then. Did you ever try to sell anything second-hand? Start out to try to sell some of your teeth on the used-teeth market, and see how near \$1,000 each you can realize. I wish I had told my dentist to go try to sell some of HIS teeth at \$1,000 each.

Another cavity in my dentist's reasoning was that each of those three teeth of mine which he saved, has been worked on at least four times before. What if each dentist who worked on each tooth had considered

## MY \$80,000 TEETH

himself the savior of that tooth—at \$1,000 per salvation? There would be \$12,000 right there. How many times do we have to buy our teeth? It begins to look as if I had about an \$80,000 mouth.

My parents paid Dr. Lowder for my teeth in the first place—or, rather, potential teeth. He took into consideration, in making his charge, that I had teeth possibilities. Of course, forty years ago, teeth were not thought to be worth more than about one dollar each, thank heaven. But what if the new school of high-priced society obstetricians hear the price that the life insurance company has put on teeth? They'll charge it, have no doubt. They'll charge it twice, because each baby is good for two sets of teeth. Babies will be about forty thousand dollars for teeth alone, to say nothing of toes and fingers and tummies. Future fatherhood has untold terrors.

And the birth cost will be only the first cost. All through childhood, dentists will be reselling children's teeth to the parents. It will cost a father a fortune to raise a daughter dentally to the marriageable age.

Nearly all children must now have their teeth straightened by an orthodontist. It is a rare child of seven to ten who now has a mouth unfilled with piano wire. This job costs about as much as a Buick sedan, and think what it will cost when orthodontists get the \$1,000 EACH idea from the life insurance company. Of course, they regard themselves as saving ALL a child's teeth. A job of orthodontistry alone will in a short time be as expensive as laying a new Atlantic cable.

I hope the life insurance companies will be a little



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

more discreet about any appraisals like this that they may feel like shooting out for professional consumption hereafter. They'll run the cost of existence up into millions. Haircuts will cost \$25 and manicures \$15, and if the grocery stores get onto this system, vitamins will be about \$10 each, and calories will be so high we will have to get them at the jewelry stores. As matters stand even now, I am thinking of giving Mrs. Herold a filling in one of her bicuspid as a present next Christmas.

\* \*

*The trouble with most motion pictures is that the producers try to produce births of a nation to portray the hatching of bantie roosters.*

\* \*

*The possibilities of talking movies have only been scratched.*

\* \*

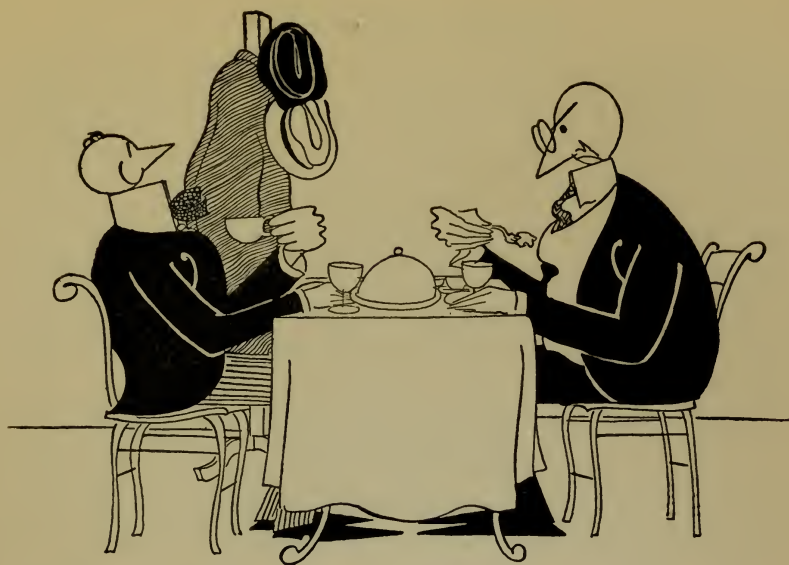
*Bud Fisher says comic strip artists do not make good husbands. And God knows they do not make good comic strips.*

\* \*

*In commenting on some of the recent dim art effects in the movies, Charles Starr says the ultimate movie will be black.*

\* \*

*One of the curses of Christmas is the Christmas cards with gaudy linings which resemble the inside of a drunkard's stomach.*



*"How's the roast beef, Charlie?"*

*"It's not as good as the roast beef we had here last Wednesday."*

### comparison charlie

I'll never forget one man that I now know. Comparison Charlie, I call him. He's a type.

"That's the funniest picture that Harold Lloyd ever made," said Comparison Charlie, once, as we came out of a motion picture theater together.

"I think all of Lloyd's pictures are funny," I said. "Funny enough, at any rate."

"I got more laughs out of this one than out of any other picture of his I ever saw," continued Comparison Charlie positively.

"How many more?" I asked, but Comparison Charlie evaded answering me. He is always positive, but he never goes quite so far as to give statistics.

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Comparison Charlie is one of those people who perceive nuances in all things—and perceive them definitely—shades of difference which are invisible to the naked eye of an ordinary mortal. He gives a clean-cut classification to everything, ranks everything rigidly, from political candidates to the glue on the back of postage stamps this year as opposed to the glue on the back of postage stamps under the last Democratic Administration.

Compared to Comparison Charlie, I hardly know I am alive. I am about half conscious. I don't know which is the funniest comedy that Charlie Chaplin or Harold Lloyd ever made. I laugh at all of them. If a movie is any good at all I think it is grand. To me three-fourths of the movies are terrible, but Comparison Charlie can tell you precisely which is the best movie that Ramon Novarro ever made and just how Greta Garbo's latest picture stacks up with her third from the last.

Comparison Charlie is the bird who knows that Barnum's circus is not quite as good this year as it was last, and who used to say that the 1922 Ziegfeld's Follies were by far the best that Ziegfeld ever produced. He says that Buick made their best car in 1913, and that the 1919 Essex was better than the 1918, and he knows what year was a Studebaker year. But it is his positive contention that the best automobile ever made was the old National. Charlie has no rough, general ideas about these things—he knows. The bearings in a certain car, for example, are so far superior to the bearings in another certain car that anybody can tell the



## COMPARISON CHARLIE

difference in a minute. Gosh, I don't even know that our car has bearings! I was asking Mrs. Herold just the other day whether our car has six cylinders or four. I can't even remember which side of the hood to tell the gas station man to lift to put oil in the motor, but Comparison Charlie knows that Gravo Oil is the only oil to use in a car in warm weather and that Googoo Oil is the stuff when winter comes. Why, he can even tell a difference in gasolines. Any thing that will burn is a cigarette to me, but Comparison Charlie would walk a mile to get his favorite brand.

He knows when the days begin to get longer, and they get not only a little bit longer but they get definitely and noticeably a whole lot longer—for Comparison Charlie. He's always a month ahead of all the rest of us in noticing a change in the length of the days. The summers are hotter than they used to be, for Charlie, and the birds come back sooner, and they sing more than they used to, and last January was wetter than January before last, and asparagus is more tender in Arizona than it is in Michigan. Imperial Valley grapefruit is the best in the world, and there is more humidity one place than there is another.

I mentioned to Comparison Charlie that I was going to New York on a trip and he said: "Of course, you are going on the New Yorkvania."

"I hadn't thought about which line I'd take," I said.

"Oh, the food is much better on the New Yorkvania and the porter service is a lot better, too."

I didn't stop him to say that that might depend on what food you happened to order and on which porter

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

you happened to get, and that, anyway, I probably wouldn't starve to death or have to make my own bed on any railroad that I took.

"Be sure to use the West Side subway in New York," said Charlie. "It's much cleaner than the East Side subway. And the Purple Taxis are better this year than the Pink. Stop in at Schrafft's and eat a chocolate eclair for me, will you, old man?"

"They're pretty good, I take it?"

"The best chocolate eclairs in New York."

It's a good thing there are people like Comparison Charlie to point the way for people like me. I live my life in a maze and a muddle, and would have to spend my time tossing coins if it were not for the Comparison Charlies. Charlie knows which oil burner is best, which radio, which phonograph, which automatic refrigerator. And he not only knows, he KNOWS.

They don't make shoes like they used to, they don't build houses like they did in the old days, young folks are wilder than they were in Charlie's youth, shirts are not what they were before the war. Charlie Comparison can compare anything.

The last time I saw him we were speaking of love.

"One thing's certain," said he, "and that is women don't love like they used to."

\* \*

*NEWS ITEM: Mr. and Mrs. Don Herold are spending a few days in Palm Springs to get away from the radio set that Mr. Herold bought last week.*



*"The Herolds are very intellectual, aren't they?"*

*"What makes you think so?"*

*"Didn't you notice the magazines they take without pictures on the covers?"*

i make a suggestion to some magazine publisher

We take several impressive-looking, non-readable, highbrow magazines and keep them around our living room to give us a more intellectual stage setting. They are strictly table magazines and the covers are as far as anybody gets, so I have a new idea for the publishers of such magazines, and that is that they publish the covers only.

It seems extravagant to spend perhaps \$24 a year for these magazines just to keep the home looking high-brow.



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

What I would suggest is that the publishers give us a blank filler and twelve new covers with high-sounding tables of contents printed on them, the filler and cover service to cost about 60 cents a year. This would put culture into thousands of homes which cannot now afford it. Think of the appearance of culture we could put up for, say \$6, by subscribing to ten of these brainy-looking publications!

A great many industries, such as safety razor companies and flashlight concerns, find it profitable to sell refills. I believe highbrow magazine publishers would make money in the long run by giving away fills and selling re-covers. In this case the container is what counts. And it is the container which gets the wear and tear. Every time it is dusted it gets a little wear, and we, ourselves, find that many of our guests like to pick these magazines up and sit with them in their lap, as if they had been interrupted in reading them. This, also, is hard on the covers.

\* \*

*It might do more to bring out the Christmas spirit in children to take things away from them at Christmas.*

\* \*

*Simile: As kittenish as the members of a male quartette.*

\* \*

*Methods of locomotion have improved greatly in recent years, but places to go remain about the same.*

in 1918, doris, our first baby, was born

While I have frequently said that the more I see of people and babies the better I like babies, yet I do feel that in the relationship between babies and their parents the parents should have an even break. There has been a growing inclination on the part of reformers and self-appointed pedagogues to the human race to submerge or eradicate the parent in behalf of the baby. Washington State College professor, Dr. G. Allen Coe, says that we should not talk baby talk to babies, but that we should give them philosophical conversation and treat them as our mental equals if we ever expect them to become such. To my mind, this is a lot of academic applesauce, and I ask the professor what is the use of raising babies unless we can have a little fun with them as they grow up, and, to put it bluntly, talk a lot of baby talk to them while they are babies? Half the pleasure of owning a baby is in talking its language, and, as one parent, I am going to persist in this practice at our house, regardless of its effects on the children. Children are not all. Parents are a little.

I am in no sympathy whatever with the attitude that considers everything from the standpoint of the welfare of the next generation. I know individuals who live entirely for their children, and they are usually pretty sad-looking birds. In one town in which we

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

lived there was one neighbor woman who boasted that she was living entirely for her five children, and she certainly looked like the wrath of God. She was doing a prize job of neglecting herself to raise her children to raise some children to raise some children. Somewhere in this cycle of repeating human life some one must pause and live a little, otherwise nobody except the bachelors and old maids are going to get any benefit of all the trouble. I, for one, am not going to refrain from talking baby talk to any babies of mine just to help them to grow up perfect. They can grow up a little imperfect for all I care—Gosh, I've got to have a little fun out of them. Don't I put up the farina and don't I buy the retreads for their nursing bottle?

My disrespect for the advice of the Washington professor is increased by my growing conviction that the kind of conversation he counsels (philosophical conversation) is possibly no good for anybody, child or adult. I really feel that I have got to the bottom of greater truths talking baby talk than I have talking philosophy. You can philosophize all evening and you haven't even hiccoughed at the eternal verities.

\* \*

*The meanest people I know are a family who have rabbit for Easter dinner.*

\* \*

*Marriage is an honorable agreement among men as to their conduct towards women, and it was devised by women.*



at our summer camp—light summer reading

(*Meddybemps, Main.*) I have often said that there is entirely too much reading matter in the world, and the thought has returned to me with renewed emphasis up here at our summer camp, and it seems to me it would be a good thing if there could be a general suspension of printing for five years.

Several years ago when we first came up here to this camp we brought along a pack of old newspapers and magazines and books, and they were about the only reading matter we have around the place. And though we go through them completely every summer, they seem to be just as good the following summer.

I am getting particularly fond of a copy of *The Indianapolis Star* of April 17th, 1919, and of a copy of *Life* of September 1906 and of the January 1918 *Atlantic Monthly*. These three cross my path most often up here at the camp, and we are becoming old friends. They have all been out in the rain and out in the burning sun, but they are still good reading.

Part of the *Star* has been used for shelf paper, but even so it is still good reading matter. I know the Strauss and Rink store ads by heart because they stick over the edge of the shelf. I read them every time I help wash dishes. Another part of the *Star* is in the top bureau drawer, and when I run out of anything else

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

to read I open the drawer and read the bottom of the drawer awhile.

This is reading that is reading. It is reading pure and simple.

There is too much culture reading and too much information reading, and not enough reading for reading's sake. A true lover of reading matter will read anything that is printed. The nearer it comes to being about nothing in particular, the better it is.

Some of the old newspaper articles make the best reading, after all. There is the San Francisco fire and the Dayton flood and the Japanese earthquake and the Dempsey-Willard fight, and the 1921 change in Ford prices—those are things that are worth reading over and over.

Big city newspapers now print editions every twenty minutes, when really, one newspaper a month would be enough if we read it thoroughly. The cities suffer more from a surfeit of reading matter than the country districts. One reason country folks are so invariably better informed than city people on national and international affairs is that they don't get a new newspaper every time they turn a corner.

A good rule for summer reading is not to read anything you haven't read six or eight times before, and don't read it with any social purpose in mind.

\* \*

*Greta Garbo always looks as if somebody had just rescued her from drowning.*

another of my many accomplishments

I am perhaps the best bread and jelly spreader there is. I have made a life study of bread and jelly spreading, and I think I know its ins and outs better than anybody else in America, if not in the world. My bread and jelly spreading has taken first prizes at seventeen world's fairs, and has been generally recognized as superior. The world's fair medals do not mean so much, as in most cases I was the only bread and jelly spreader who exhibited, but what does convince me that I was pretty good in this line is the appreciation with which my efforts are received by little children for whom I spread bread and jelly.

I have made a study of the child mind in relation to bread and jelly. My own personal interest in bread and jelly began in 1890 when I was less than one year old. It looked good to me as soon as I could look at anything. I think I realized even when I was on a liquid diet that some day bread and jelly and I were going to be good friends. In fact, I recall that at the age of seven months I asked my mother if it would not be possible for her to prepare bread and jelly for me in a liquid form and she said "No." How anxiously, then, I looked forward to the day when my little teeth would be strong enough and sharp enough to handle their first bread and jelly.

After I began to eat bread and jelly there were of course many years when I was dependent upon others for the spreading. It was during these years that I



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

formulated my spreading philosophy. Most of my spreaders were pretty poor. Most of them seemed to think that all that was necessary was to put some butter and some jelly on some bread. I presume they reasoned that it was largely a matter of nourishment, anyway, and that no matter how the three ingredients were combined exteriorly they would all be properly combined when they reached the human stomach, anyway, and devil take the hindmost. They failed to realize that children are essentially aesthetic and epicurean—or at least that the kid they were dealing with when they were dealing with me was those two things. Perhaps it was hurry rather than thoughtlessness that led them to spread bread and jelly so poorly. I will never know.

Ask the average man to spread you some bread and jelly and he will put a few gobs of butter around and apply a few hunks of jelly here and there and call it a day. I will tell you how I came to the conclusion that the lump school of jelly spreading is all wrong.

In the first place, what is the correct unit to be considered in arriving at a decision as to a rational bread and jelly technique? Most people think only of the slice of bread. But the mouth of the child is too small to take an entire slice of bread at one gulp. No, the only unit about which we should think when spreading bread and jelly is the INDIVIDUAL BITE. How is each bite of that big piece of bread going to be when it is bitten by the consumer? Obviously, then, this brings us to the conclusion that on each bite there should be some butter and jelly. If you take a bite off

## ANOTHER OF MY MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

of the upper righthand corner, it is not going to mean much to you that there is a big bunch of butter on the upper lefthand corner and a big gob of jelly on the lower righthand corner. You may see them way over there and know that you are going to get them eventually, but this sort of mental synthesis is not going to help that particular bite a whole lot. No, what you want and what you have a right to demand is butter and jelly *everywhere*. That's how I spread mine, and this explains why children come from miles around to get me to spread their bread and jelly.

When I take a piece of bread in my hand, and see the eager eyes of some little child looking up at me, I try to throw myself into the place of that child. I forget my position as a social leader and as a big man in the business world, and, for a while, I have only a child's attitude towards life in general and towards bread and jelly in particular. And when I am through, the butter and jelly are so uniformly spread on that slice of bread that you might apply a micrometer test to my handiwork and not find it more than a half an inch thicker at one spot than at another. And I bring the butter and the jelly lovingly down to within an eighth of an inch of the edge of the bread all around. Any of you folks are welcome to come over to our house for some bread and jelly any time.

Of course, bread and jelly spreading is merely a hobby with me now, but it is entirely possible that it might become a fine thing for me in my old age. I am so good at it that I know I could easily get a job in my declining years as bread and jelly spreader at the Ritz.

i begin to worry about sending doris to college

We have worried night and day as to how we will get Doris through college. I mean the money. (She will be the first of our two daughters to go away to school.)

I have consulted six of my bankers and three of my brokers, and have written to the financial experts of nine newspapers. The first banker said: "You might begin now to put aside a little money every month and let it accumulate with compound interest and by the time Doris is old enough to go to college it will be there for her to use."

Other bankers and brokers have made practically the same suggestion. They are a clever lot of boys.

This plan, however, has appeared to us as tedious and almost vulgar. Systematic saving of this sort would mean a great deal of self denial on our part. Mrs. Herold would have to go without a fur coat while her other three are at the laundry. I would have to quit drinking my Scotch out of a saucer. Yes, there are times when this plan would pinch us.

And Doris, after her parents had saved and skimped for many long years might decide she did not want to go to college. She might decide to become an actress or a magazine artist or a trapeze performer or to take up some other career in which ignorance is bliss.



## WORRY ABOUT SENDING DORIS TO COLLEGE

Well, we were worrying along like this, with the problem becoming more and more depressing, and, in fact, becoming almost desperate as the day drew near on which Doris was to enter college, when I chanced on a copy of the *Poultry, Garden and Farm Annual*.

Mrs. Herold and I had gone to the poultry show to get away from the perplexing dilemma which hounded our every waking moment, and one of the exhibitors thrust this poultry journal under my arm.

Now we know how Doris can go to college.

A hen will yield a profit of \$4.00 a year, above feed and keep. I gleaned this from the *P. G. and F. Annual*.

Doris can decide what it is going to cost her to go to college (when the time comes) and divide that figure by four, and keep that many hens. For example, if college costs her \$2,000 a year, she can keep 500 hens.

I don't know just where she will keep them. (I have written to some of the foremost colleges for their poultry regulations.) Of course, I hardly expect her to keep them in her room under her bed, but she is resourceful enough to work that out when she gets to college and looks around.

I will do a father's part and buy her 500 good eggs and a Montgomery Ward incubator as a start, and wish her well.

I have carefully outlined this plan and had my lawyer put it into good legal form and have placed it in my safety deposit box and marked it "For Doris. To be opened the day she starts to college."

If she decides she does not want to go to college, I

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

will not be out a cent, and we will not have a pile of money on our hands to embarrass us in our old age.

I tell you, this lifts an awful load off of our minds, and we are glad to give it to other parents for what it is worth. We speak of it around the house as of our "\$4. per hen" plan.

If I die before Doris is of college age, the plan will still be just as good a plan as if I were alive.

If Mrs. Herold and I live until Doris goes to college and if the plan succeeds as well as I anticipate, it is possible that Mother and I will go down and live with her on her chicken farm. If she selects a coeducational college I may take a few courses which I have always felt I rather slighted the last time I went to college. If she selects a girls' school, I will just go down and take things easy, gathering the eggs and keeping the wick trimmed in the incubator.

\* \*

*Mrs. Herold says that when she gets the children to bed at night she feels as if her day had just started.*

\* \*

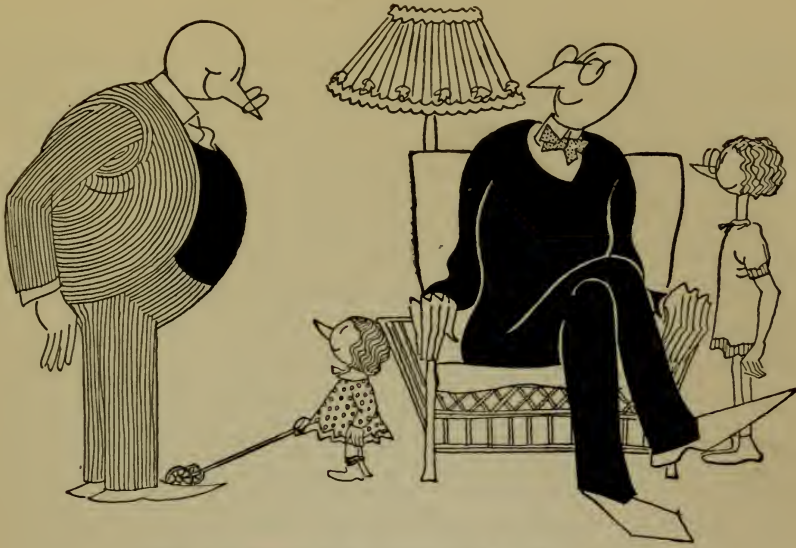
*The dress of the modern girl is the antithesis of the Mother Hubbard, for which praise God.*

\* \*

*Doctors thinks a lot of patients are cured who have simply quit in disgust.*

\* \*

*I don't want to bother anybody in this world except people who won't let other people alone.*



*"Did you want the second one to be a boy?"*

*"Oh, no. Anything—just so it was a person."*

hildegarde arrived in 1925

Our second daughter, Hildegard, was born in 1925, and a couple of years later I was thinking along these lines:

I don't know where some people get the idea that boys are better than girls or that girls are better than boys, or that either amounts to so awful much in the long run, for that matter. I can't get any ideas or prejudices on topics so large. I am not even sure, in the first place, that life itself is worthwhile, but I don't think it is good practical policy to admit that it isn't, and I am going to live my life out as if it were simply grand. As to such details as to whether boys or girls are preferable, I won't argue for a minute. Except that I do feel like arguing when any one comes around



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

wanting to argue, and most of them seem to want to argue for the boys. Bear in mind that I think both stand the chance of being pretty bad when they grow up—the boy may turn into a Republican or a Democrat and a lodge member of some kind, and the girl may be a fat housewife or a politician or an inveterate bridge player. Boys and girls, alas! both become adults.

Somehow I imagine that girls as babies are a little better than boys as babies. It seems a little more natural for a girl to be a baby than for a boy to be a baby. The girls seem a little more born to it. They are perhaps daintier and pinker and more patable. I don't know. Perhaps a boy baby seems just as fragile and valuable to his parents.

Then come the first three or four years of their lives, and it seems to me that maybe the girls have it on the boys through this period too—from the parents' standpoint. Most of your communion with them at this age is through the eye, and you can doll the little girls up to a fare-ye-well, but you have to begin, even this early, to dress the boys like well-dressed business men.

Next arrives a period about which I am not certain—from six to sixteen. Doris is now in this state, and there are times when I wonder if she would be better or worse if she were a boy. She is grasping the conventionalities, the routines, the tricks, the manners of civilization. It sometimes seems a silly business to me, but I believe it would seem equally silly if she were a boy. I like to see her apply herself to books and drawing and to difficulties such as swimming and turning

## HILDEGARDE ARRIVED IN 1925

handsprings, and I think I would get maybe a little more enjoyment out of watching a boy doing the same things because he might attack them even more seriously. Doris is pretty much concerned about her ability to name automobiles as they pass, and I like it. It might be that a boy of her age would be going more deeply into such matters and perhaps be able to discuss the relative advantages of various types of motors, and, if so, I would like it. Perhaps Doris is a little more serious-minded than most girls of her age, and I like her. I think if I happened to draw a serious-minded boy of this age I would like him, but he might, of course, be just a rattle-brained rowdy.

Right here let me say that I feel it is a good thing for any man to be bruised by contact with such dainty and delicate things as little daughters. Perhaps a father of daughters becomes a more sensitive citizen in the long run than the father of sons. It would be fine, I think, if we could all try about two of each, and if I could have the next two myself I would not mind bearing and rearing a couple of boys, just to acquire an all-around knowledge on this subject.

There is no question, I feel certain, that between ten and twenty somewhere there are five or six years when boys and girls both are a curse and an abomination. Here, some time, they both go through what George Ade calls the damn fool period. I am sure that at this point the parent of either wishes he had the other.

Speaking from the standpoint of a father, I look forward to the young womanhood of my daughters with hope and fear. There will be times when they will side

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

with Mrs. Herold, and I will be one against three. This may be exactly what I shall need in many situations. Sometimes they may lead me into Lincoln expenditures on a Ford income, and even this may spur me to desirable efforts. If we have an honest desire for the best in our lives we should be utterly willing to submit to what may superficially seem to be the worst.

There is one gratifying thought to the father of girls. I believe that women get about twice as much enjoyment out of life as men. We will say that life hurts a sensitive woman less than it hurts a sensitive man. I believe that as a rule women are not as smart as men but that they know more. A man may get a better hang of the tricks of trade and the ins and outs of the artificialities of human existence, but a woman glows more to the fundamentals of life. She usually does the better job of making the best of things. I believe, on the whole, that I would rather give life to a girl than to a boy, to a woman than to a man—it is a finer thing to her. So, after all, I do seem to find myself arguing a bit.

\* \*

*You ought to get a lot done in a day. Look at a circus.*

\* \*

*It is a good thing that life is not as serious as it seems to a waiter.*

\* \*

*We used to be good friends with the Blanks, but we out-blasé-ed them.*



## fever in children

Some parents will not have a thermometer in the house, on the theory that if you do not take a child's temperature it isn't there, but we find that the use of a thermometer makes child-raising much more interesting and exciting—more of a game, as it were. We have whiled away many a long winter evening taking the children's temperature, and if you really want intense and inexpensive thrills in the home I advise you to go to some sporting goods store and buy a good reliable fever thermometer and take up this fascinating indoor pastime. It may be annoying to the children, but I here reassert my old contention that children are not all. It is pretty soft for children to lie in bed with a fever, and we parents must have our pleasures too. If theirs is to be the fun of having the fever, we should be allowed the fun of keeping the score.

Be sure you have the right kind of thermometer and then go ahead and enjoy it.

By that I mean do not try to use a weather thermometer on little children or a little children thermometer on the weather. Independent as I am in regard to children I would never ask a child of mine to hold a pine plank under its tongue for a half hour. (We always leave a thermometer in for half an hour. It's the best way to make sure. A child may have a high fever one

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

minute and a light fever the next. By leaving the thermometer in for thirty minutes you get a better line on things. Besides, it adds to the suspense.)

Furthermore, weather fever and children's fever are two different dishes, and it would be a lot of bother to translate the reading on an outdoor or weatherboarding thermometer into terms of human heat. It could be done, but you would have to have a lot of tables and chairs and logarithms and scales, and by that time your child might be up and running around.

What is fever and what isn't?

The average normal healthy child has a temperature somewhere between 98.6 to 110. Anything over that is fever. If a child has a temperature of 150, it may be said to be warm, and if it runs to 200, it may be called hot, and if it goes up to 1,000 you have something to worry about. At 1,500 you had better call a doctor and the fire department.

I may be said to be something of a fever expert because I have had more or less fever all my life. If it hasn't been one thing it has been another. I once had a fever of 200 for two consecutive years and it left me baldheaded. They used to bleed us in those days, but I did not do a thing. At that time I had great faith in the power of mind over matter, and my faith was vindicated because I finally dropped down to a normal temperature of 109, which I maintained for seven months straight before my next thermatic adventure.

\* \* \*

## how i exploded the early-rising theory

I was brought up where farmers started to work at five or six o'clock and where stores opened at seven or eight. Even the bank in Bloomfield used to open at eight and stay open until four, if my memory serves me incorrectly, as I mean it to for present purposes. All my boyhood books counselled returning lost purses and getting up bright and early as sure-fire rules for success. The heroic lads in these misleading narratives were always waiting on the doorstep when the rich employer came to open up his shop or office or factory. (I'll bet Horatio Alger never set his pen to paper before two or three o'clock in the afternoon.) All through school and even through college, the early-to-rise slogan was hammered into me. After leaving college I worked for three years in a place in Indianapolis which opened at eight and my employer used to look at the clock and then at me and then at the clock when I came five minutes late. Well, I was then a member of an eight o'clock organization and if I had it to do over I would be there at eight every morning. But I developed a passionate antipathy for eight o'clock, then and there.

Then I moved to New York, a nine o'clock city, and for years nine o'clock held me in its iron grip, even after I quit organizations and became a free lance. I



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

used to give up many a good day as the result of discouragement born of a 9:15 start.

Then the idea came down to me from heaven that perhaps it made no difference when I started, just so I started. Some day I hope to achieve eleven o'clock. One cartoonist friend of mine never gets going before four in the afternoon. He makes twice as much money as I do. He lets no clock stampede him into premature endeavor.

My chief trouble when I had the nine o'clock hallucination was that I used to start work before I had decided for that day that life was worth living. Unless one is performing purely mechanical labor, he should do nothing until he has arrived fully at that attitude—even if it takes him until midnight. Surely we do not want any musical compositions or paintings or essays or inventions or industrial ideas out of men who do not believe that life is worth living. If they feel otherwise about it, they had better keep their mouths shut. If they keep on feeling otherwise about it, they had better take up carpentry, where they can start to work at eight o'clock and let the smell of sawdust and the zizz of the saw and the motion of their arm gradually convince them that there are possible delights in living human life.

I find I get my philosophical thingamajings adjusted to a contented acceptance of life at about ten a. m., or five or ten minutes one way or the other, and then I go to work.

To begin with, I stay in bed until I can figure out some good reason to get up. It may be the fragrance

## HOW I EXPLODED THE EARLY-RISING THEORY

of coffee. It may on rare occasions be a strange impulse to get at a job of writing or drawing. It may be the thought of some films I left at the drug store for developing and printing. It may be the cackle of the baby in the nursery. It may be sunshine on a brick chimney across the street. The other day I could think of no good reason and I stayed in bed all day, pretending a bad cold. Why get up to live life until you want to live life—unless you have an appointment with the dentist or with a rolling mill or with the ice-man, or unless somebody is going to fire you if you are late to work?

This is an audacious doctrine, I know, but I feel that most of the real enjoyment of life is born of some sort of audacity. We are scared of leisure in America, anyway. Even our golf is justified on the grounds that it peps us up and makes us more efficient than we would be without golf, or on the grounds that playing golf with a big jobber is the best way to sell him two carloads of washboards or tar paper. Why not defy the gods and play golf with the honest admission that it is a waste of time? We need more sincere thievery of this sort in this country. I have an inkling that they idle better in England, and about the only reason I have for wanting to go abroad is to learn some of the fine points of leisurely living from the British. There must be an accomplished and delicious defiance of the gods in the English institution of tea. Over here we are learning to take shorter hours, but I think that we take our shorter hours because we believe we should take what we can get, and not because we have any

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

true notion of the use of leisure time. There must be men in the world who know how to loaf graciously all day long, and I would like to meet them. I can do it only until ten a. m., after which I set my teeth into diligence of one sort or another until bedtime. I would like to meet some of the world's gracious loafers and partake of their graciousness and join them in a pilgrimage to the grave of Horatio Alger and decorate it with a wreath of poison ivy.

\* \*



## when i lived in new york

Pioneers have no sense. Though we have all been brought up to think of our pioneer fathers as hardy and heroic, the fact is that they lacked every attribute of intelligent human beings: imagination, foresight, caution, judgment, sense of value.

Our pioneer forefathers who did so much for us, were a set of stupids of whom we have every reason to feel very much ashamed.

What I mean to say is that we poor saps who constitute the population of New York City are building better than we know, are doing a work for posterity which we do not even imagine. In ages to come, the millions and millions of us will be regarded as heroes, though the truth is that we are a bunch of senseless saps, a lot of microbes in the greatest laboratory experiment of all time—to date. If we had any brains we would all leave this town instantly, yet we choose to stick here—and pioneer.

Frontiers are not always geographical.

We New Yorkers are explorers on the frontier of a new kind of human existence—human existence in groups of six millions or more. We endure hardships far worse than those borne by the covered wagon pioneers, and we don't know when we are bad off.

In such elemental things as transportation, struggle

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

for shelter, strife for the necessities of life, racial friction, religious conflict, we are in for more primeval circumstances than those with which the early settlers did daily battle.

We have no raging rivers to ford, but what are a few raging rivers in the course of a lifetime compared to the continued, repeated, morning and evening crush of the subway? Years and years of that, we get ourselves. Never in the history of man was shelter such a problem as it is at this moment on Manhattan Island. Nine-tenths of us live in quarters which would have killed our coon-skinned granddaddies in a few months. Or we court inevitable calamity by living beyond our means.

Each day of our miserable lives we must bare teeth and claw in the fight for the sheer necessities of life—such as theater tickets, or sealskin coats for our women. Only the fittest survive.

We do not have to fight Indians; we have to fight all kinds of foreigners.

It is harder to keep dry, warm, fed and amused in New York than it has ever been in any clime or zone since Adam and Eve.

I am telling you we live where men are men.

Out west they have things soft.

We are breaking the wilderness of a Great City.

You do not think, do you, that New York will always be as it is now? You do not think, do you, that **THIS IS ANY WAY TO LIVE?**

There must come a day, when riding in the subway will be as restful as a stroll in fields of clover. There

## WHEN I LIVED IN NEW YORK

must come a day when traffic will be so controlled, synchronized or abolished, that half the population will not have to jump from under the wheels of the other half. You do not think God intended that we should make each other jump. Hurry is a curse. There must come a day when shelter and warmth can be attained for the fraction of an honest month's labor instead of for all of it.

The city must be hushed to soothing silences, blown with fresh fragrances, dotted with flowers—in short, made humanly habitable. Stinking stupidity must be stamped out of high offices. We are the pioneers in the simplification of this immense intricacy.

There will come a day, centuries hence, when some of our children's children will look back on us as heroes. And others of them will look back on what we endured for their sake and say: "The poor simps!"

The latter will be right.

\* \* \*





*"Rankin wants to have this a city of a million by 1935."*

*"Some people are never happy unless they're sleeping three in a bed."*

more hate for new york

What almost every city needs is a little boosting backward.

It is only green people who think that a big city is a good thing to have. The better and wiser element in

## MORE HATE FOR NEW YORK

every town should get together and try to keep the town at a standstill.

Look at New York. A calamity and a pestilence unto itself. Several million people living in a town unfit for human habitation. If you don't believe it, ask any honest New Yorker—if you can find one. But here lies the gist of the misunderstanding as to the worth of size in cities. Census figures (exaggerated a little to round them out, always) make such handy instruments for boasters. Your New Yorker knows that he lives in a filthy mess of a town, yet if you corner him in a smoking room argument about comparative merits of cities he will brag of New York's seven millions—yes, brag of them—when he knows that six and three quarters of those seven millions are a cursed nuisance to him, a big, bad smell and nothing more. They get under his feet, crowd his elbows, make travel to and from his place of work a beastly battle, make his office a roar, his home a coop, his lunch hour a food fight, his expenses an outrage, and his life generally a pigpen proposition, yet he holds up the round number of seven million to shame the inhabitant of any city which counts fewer noses. And the timid citizen of the hinterland metropolis envies him and makes a secret resolution to do everything he can from that moment on to make his town a big town, too. If he is from Los Angeles, for example, he may pipe: "Well, we are going on our second million, and we will have it by 1940. You watch our smoke." Smoke is right. Smoke and monoxide gas.

What he ought to say is something like this: "We, alas, now have a million and a quarter, but we hope to

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

get back to a million by 1935 by being a bit choosy as to whom we admit and as to whom we keep. Everybody in Los Angeles is boosting body and soul to get Los Angeles back to a half million by 1950."

It would be an interesting experiment to see some city go ahead energetically in the development and refinement of its utilities and at the same time go deliberately backward in its population. This would be working in two directions for the comfort of life in that city. As things now pass, we have populations of a million living in three-quarter million cities. There is hardly a town of any size in America which is big enough for its population. Nearly all of our big towns are in a continuously torn-up, topsy-turvied condition, trying to catch up with their census. Streets are ditched and gullied and be-bumped and dirty, transportation facilities are inadequate, schools are hectic, parks are too small, automobiles too numerous, and things generally in an unsettled scramble. In every city, sandwiched in between the boosters at the top, who ballyhoo for a bigger and bigger town, and the populators at the bottom, who move in and add themselves to the numerical grandeur of the place, there is a cooler and saner citizenship which would rather see the town stand still until it gets over its growing pains, but theirs is a still, small, minority voice. Their attitude is: Why should our town be made to grow when all that it gets any of us who live here is a growing pain?

No doubt the boosters boost because they are either interested in the increase of real estate values or in an increase in trade. But if you own a piece of real estate



## MORE HATE FOR NEW YORK

or a fairly prosperous store in a fairly peaceful town, there is not much to be gained in having your lots go up in value or your store go up in its sales, if those growths are dependent upon having ten thousand additional undesirable people stepping on your toes, impeding your walks or rides, parking their cars for nine blocks on either side of the movie at which you would like to spend a quiet evening. They make you move three miles further out toward the country, so that it takes you twice as long to get to and from work, and they dent your fenders and empty their monoxide gas into your lungs. You die ten years sooner (maybe). Your real estate values and your store sales go up, and your life values go down. You come out behind where you were.

As a rule, it is the more undesirable people who make quick increases in population. If they were greatly desired where they came from, they could not so readily get away. Looking at the inhabitants of New York's East Side, I can't imagine their being greatly missed in the sections which they left in Europe. But they largely constitute New York's proudly boasted seven million.

I mean no snobbishness when I speak of undesirable people. All people are equal, but some of them wash more thoroughly behind their children's ears, keep their sidewalks cleaner of celery tops and other surplus groceries, and maintain fewer mangy alley cats than others. My point is that the people who help cities to have big populations do not as a rule help to make cities good places in which to live.

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Even a city which stands still is bad enough, under the theory that the life of a business building is twenty years, for we have one-twentieth of the big buildings coming down each year and scattering plaster and splinters, and new buildings machine-gunning themselves toward the sky in their places.

Imagine a city with courage enough to mark time as to its population growth until it could discover what to do with its present quota of monoxide gas. What if Los Angeles, for instance again, should put out a nation-wide publicity campaign with the slogan: "Don't move to Los Angeles—it is bad enough at present without you!"

I presume cities grow a little just by births. Well, I don't go so far as to suggest a municipal ordinance regulating the birthrate, but sillier ordinances than that have been passed. All I care about is getting the cities smaller by some hook or crook.

\* \*

Upon completing this, I was so impressed that I moved to the little suburban village of Bronxville, just north of New York.

\* \*

## after my impacted-molar extraction

I enjoyed telling about the extraction of my tooth, so I decided to tell about it on a large scale. I bought a large chatauqua tent, had moving pictures and magic lantern slides made, and arranged a tour of the largest cities in the United States.

Why should we not do with all our heart and soul the things we really enjoy doing, providing of course that they are wholesome? Others might have hesitated out of false modesty or some other silly reason, about making a great tour to tell about having a tooth pulled, but not I.

We opened in Stamford, Conn., in August, 1921—but I am getting ahead of my story.

The tooth was an impacted wisdom tooth, the lowest form of tooth life—the snake of teeth. All my life I shall hate and oppose impacted wisdom teeth. I shall villify them whenever I get the opportunity. I shall fight for legislation against them—warn little children against them—take the lecture platform or the vaudeville stage or even the circus arena as their avowed life-long antagonist. I don't like them.

They are the drones of the teeth family.

They take up twice the room a normal tooth should occupy because they lie down instead of standing up like little men and women. They shove and bully the



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

well-meaning christian teeth in front of them. They are the end-seat swine of the upper and lower jaws. I will have more derogatory things than this to say about them before I die. I am now only a neophyte as an insulter of impacted wisdom teeth.

I am perhaps the only person alive who has had as much fun telling about getting a tooth pulled as he would like to have had.

I had large circus poster enlargements made of the X-ray of my tooth with large lettering: "Come and Hear About Don Herold's Tooth Being Pulled. (Movies and in Person)." I figured that everybody who had teeth was a logical customer for my entertainment, but my main motives were to have fun, and to entertain mankind, not to make money.

The first scene of my moving picture was in a dental office. The dentist was standing at attention at his empty chair. His beautiful assistant was laying out the instruments. Now and then she was seen to feel her jaw as if it hurt her. (This was important. It had a bearing on the story.) Then there appeared the subtitle:

"CAME THE DON."

That was I, and I came in holding my jaw a little, but smiling heroically.

The dentist looked in and said: "I think we had better have an X-ray of this." The beautiful assistant held her jaw a little.

Then I was next shown over at the X-ray studio getting a picture taken, and the next scene was back in the dental office. The dentist tore open the X-ray envelope

## AFTER MY IMPACTED-MOLAR EXTRACTION

and burst into loud laughter. "You have got a pretty party ahead of you," he chuckled. "You will have to go over to Dr. Hasbroke's and have this impacted wisdom tooth taken out. It's a beaut. Under the bone and upside down. Not a mere extraction, but a surgical operation. Some dentists could break your jaw getting that out. It must come out. It is the only way we can save the tooth in front of it. Excuse me. I want to show this X-ray to the elevator operator."

Here he left the room, and the beautiful assistant held her jaw and said, "I have one just like that which has got to come out some day when I can get my nerve up." (This was intended to be the start of a love theme in my tooth movie, but I got so interested in my tooth that I forgot all about her tooth, and the heroine practically disappeared from the film at this point.)

Then in my cinema I was soon shown in Dr. Hasbroke's sitting room, waiting, with dozens of other freshmen, for my matriculation. At this point I stopped the film for fifteen minutes and philosophized my audience—on teeth—how seriously we take them, and how facetiously they take us.

I carried actual dental tools with me on my lecture tour to make my discourse all the more thrilling, such as chisels, mallets, augers, gimlets, planes, jacks, saws, forceps and prys.

I wanted my story to be as big as "The Birth of a Nation" so I showed miners digging for coal, riveters putting up a skyscraper, stone workers drilling and blasting a subway, mountains avalanching, giant forest trees crashing to earth, trains colliding, motor cars

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

crashing into stone walls, skyscrapers falling down. These were all symbolical suggestions of how it felt when that wisdom tooth was coming out under novocaine.

Every few feet of film I flashed back to the original X-ray of my tooth, to help keep the mind of my audience on the main point.

I even had a plaster cast of the tooth made, twenty feet long. The ushers were dressed in white dental coats. The tickets were printed to represent dentist's appointment cards. I had the tent treated with iodoform. The stage was draped in gauze. I was dressed in the rubber shield and white towel of an extractionee.

I carried a staff of noise makers to set off things behind the scenes to help me make my descriptions vivid.

For once in history, justice was going to be done to a description of a tooth extraction.

As I say, we opened in Stamford, Conn.

Well, the whole thing was a flop.

The tent was crowded, and, at first, enthusiasm was at white heat. But as soon as I started I was interrupted. Folks popped up here and there in the audience and said: "Just a minute, professor, but I would like to tell about an impacted wisdom tooth I had taken out in the summer of 1912. You see, it was broken off and my dentist—"

People looked at the twenty feet statue of my wisdom tooth and alongside the memory of *theirs* it looked trivial.

They began to talk to each other and point into their mouths, saying, "Uooogh aghdt daght cabidigity."



## AFTER MY IMPACTED-MOLAR EXTRACTION

Not over nine people of the thousands who came to hear me were paying any attention to me at the finish.

They were all telling each other about THEIRS.

At the close of my lecture they came up to tell me.

I admitted my failure.

I had one of the worst extractions in history and I had prepared a half million dollar description of it, a stupendous, epoch-making, colossal entertainment enterprise. But—

Nobody wanted to hear anything about it. They wanted to tell about THEIRS.

\* \* \*



*"I expect to be eternally happy in the next world."*

*"No, you won't. You've never had the knack in this world, and you can't teach an old dog new tricks."*

i reflect seriously on silliness

Sometimes when I am trying to work in my study and the children are playing in the hall I call out to Mrs. Herold that she must keep those kids quiet—that they are interfering with my work. That is very short-sighted thinking on my part. The real fact is, my work should at no time interfere with the children's fun, because the whole purpose of my work is to make more

## I REFLECT SERIOUSLY ON SILLINESS

fun possible for the larger and smaller Herolds. Sometimes this is hard to remember. It is so easy to fall into the sin of seriousness. Sometimes I forget and think that I am slaving away here to pile up money with which to pay their dental bills, and lose sight of the fact that the only excuse for dentists is that they enable us not to take our teeth too seriously—that is, they are to keep our teeth from interfering with our fun. Or I may think I am preparing to send the children through college and I may catch myself hoping that they will take their college course seriously—which is all applesauce, unless qualified to some extent. There is no virtue in a college education—just a college education. The most unfortunate mortals I have ever known in this world were some of my fellow college students who were wonderful students, but with absolutely no knack for applying their knowledge to the increase of their enjoyment of life. I don't want my children to become educated for the sake of education, but for the sake of the enrichment of their lives, i. e., for the increase of their capacity for foolishness.

Bankers are to make comedians possible. The tremendous organization of the Ford Motor Car Company would not mean a thing if it did not make possible an increase of enjoyable gadding about by Ford owners—visits to Uncle Ben's, Sunday dinner at Lulu's, picnics at Mulberry Bend, the movie at Gosport, and similar such silliness. If you ever go to Detroit and anybody takes you out and shows you the big smokestacks and the huge dynamos of the Ford plant don't be impressed by them at all. They will show it all to you



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

as a marvelous industrial accomplishment, but it is of no significance whatever as an industrial accomplishment. If Ford cars don't mean fun, they don't mean anything. The New York Central Railroad has, no doubt, a very solemn and sedate and dignified board of directors, but there is no excuse whatever for the New York Central or any other railroad except in so far as it helps humans to cut capers more conveniently. It makes it possible for the Jones family of Syracuse to go spend a jolly Thanksgiving with the Jones family of Toledo. Oh, but, you say, these big railroads aid the commercial development of America, and I say, what is the commercial development of America? We see a fat salesman boarding the Century at the New York Central Station in New York, on his way to Chicago. He has a black sample case in his porter's right hand. The man is a drummer, a commercial traveler, a man who represents one of the big manufacturing concerns of Brooklyn. And what is his purpose in going to Chicago? Well, he hopes to land orders for half a carload of ten-cent dolls from six big department stores in Chicago—in short, he and the porter and the conductor and the whole N. Y. C. railroad system are all seriously employed in increasing the gurgles of babies over those dime dolls in the Chicago district. Two months later a freight train will snake its way seriously across the continent with one car half loaded with those dime dolls. Wall Street brokers will buy and sell railroad stocks feverishly. And it will all be for the fundamental purpose of getting giggles out of Middle West kiddies.

## I REFLECT SERIOUSLY ON SILLINESS

It is the same with morals and moral codes. Some people think that the purpose of morals is to cut down fun, but I wouldn't give a whoop for a moral that did not ultimately increase fun. And I don't think a moral precept would last long that did not in the long run make possible an increase in human hilarity. We don't steal from each other, theoretically because it is wrong to steal, but actually because it is no fun to be stolen from. There are some forms of wickedness which are thoroughly enjoyable, yet I feel it is a perfectly safe platform for morality if we say to mankind: Do that which is in the long run the most fun. A little thinking will check the wise bargainer from any great excesses or indiscretions.

Some people, I know, discount this world entirely and live through it with long, long faces, and live through it solemnly and seriously and sourly, expecting their reward in heaven. But even they expect to tear lose at some sort of foolishness in heaven—they have some sort of music in mind to reward them for their sustained deafness to the tinkles of this world, and some sort of dancing to compensate them for their long sitting in this life. I am afraid some of the nicest ones are looking forward to a big debauch in the next world, with heavenly approval, of course. So thus we see, upon complete analysis, that even the most serious of us have some kind of foolishness in mind eventually.

\* \* \*



i answer the doorbell

This was written one day when we lived in Bronxville!

Living in a house in the suburbs, we are bothered a great deal by agents coming to our front door. I meet



## I ANSWER THE DOORBELL

a great many young men who are working their way through college. (There goes the doorbell now. Excuse me a minute.) Yes, it was a young man taking magazine subscriptions, and he said he was working his way through college, and I told him I was working Doris' and Hildegarde's way through college—I salt away a little each year toward their college expenses—and that I do not like to be interrupted in the process. We fellows who are working somebody's way through college should try not to bother each other. I told him, further, that I felt that that phase of his solicitation was irrelevant. His magazines should stand or fall on their own merits. I do not accompany my manuscripts to publishers with reminders that I am working Doris' and Hildegarde's way through college, though there are times, heaven knows, when I hope they are human enough to think of such things.

My attitude toward solicitors and other interruptions varies from hour to hour. Sometimes I fly into a rage at interruptions, but this, I know, is often because I am anxious to fly into a rage at anything. Other times I feel that interruptions are the spice of life. Routine, certainly, is not the spice of life. Digressions and detours are much more entertaining than mapped roads. Irrelevancies are perhaps, after all, the real relevancies.

I have the chance to think a great deal on this subject of interruptions, because I do all of my work at home now. This does not mean that I have more interruptions than a downtown or office-worker, but it means that I have more time to think about them. In fact,

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

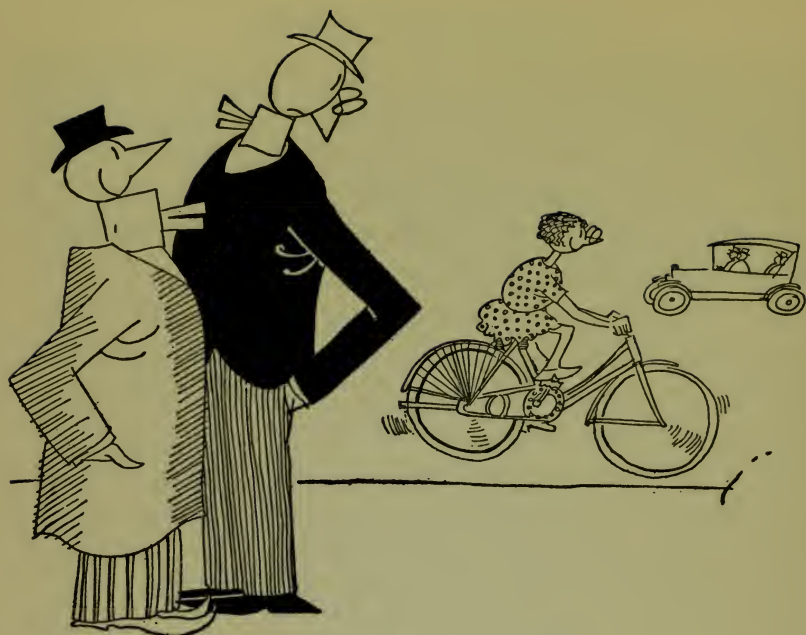
one reason I gave up an office in New York was that I found office work one long interruption. I don't know any place where there is so little work done as in the average office, nor anybody who gets as little work done as the average business man. The first thing he does is to answer his mail—in short, he gives the best hour of his day to every Tom, Dick and Harry who has presumed to write him a letter the day before. He thus surrenders absolutely his best moments to the whims of other people. He "gets his mail out of the way." Sometimes I think that (pardon me, there's the telephone)—I was saying that sometimes I think there should be some provision to prevent just anybody who wants to write or telephone a man from writing or telephoning him. The postoffice department and the telephone company should require some kind of credentials from anybody presuming to encroach upon the time and eyesight or hearing of another person. Of course, I know that big men protect themselves to some extent with secretaries, but even secretaries should be protected, somehow. I used to find office work 90 per cent lost motion, and that is why I came home to do my work. I have often said that if I must be interrupted I would rather be interrupted by somebody I love, such as Mrs. Herold and the children, than by lead pencil salesmen and gentlemen seeking to interest me in trick telephone appliances or insurance to "protect my loved ones." But I do frequently get darned tired of being interrupted by those I love. We now happen to be living in a house with twelve big rooms in it, yet the fam-

## I ANSWER THE DOORBELL

ily invariably gathers for its most important fights and fiestas just outside what I sometimes derisively call my studio. A half-hour ago I called to (yelled at) Mrs. Herold and asked her if there were not some way in the hell in which she might make things out there a little less interesting to me.

\* \* \*





*"I see you got Doris a bicycle for Christmas."*

*"Yes, my better judgment told me I shouldn't let her have one, so I did."*

### doris joins the traffic

Doris got a bicycle one Christmas. It reminded me again that I don't know anything about anything.

I have a deep conviction that young girls have no business with bicycles in this automobile age. In fact I have a deep conviction that bicycles and automobiles have no business in the same world. But I also have a deep conviction that few of my deep convictions amount to anything. If there is anything I know, it is that few of my deep convictions should be allowed to guide my conduct or affect my decisions. It is my more

## DORIS JOINS THE TRAFFIC

superficial convictions to which I should listen attentively.

Often I wish I were one of those many people who trust and act upon their deep convictions. Where do people get their certainties? Some of them know everything so definitely about raising children, about politics, morals, war and all public issues which arise from day to day. They have the gift of putting their foot down decisively on one side of every subject. As a rule I find both sides charming and repulsive. In politics, for example, my usual desire is to vote against both candidates, and I believe that political history has shown that in most instances I would have voted wisely. In many debates I am either for or against both sides. I was absolutely opposed to Doris's getting a bicycle, yet I was equally sympathetic with Mrs. Herold's instinct that she should have one.

It is lucky that I have Mrs. Herold to cast a hunch in the balance in these otherwise undecidable controversies in my mind. She feared a bicycle just as much as I did, yet it was her intuitive feeling that we could not raise Doris on fears. Doris is already inclined to be something of a coward and a hypochondriac and comes home every few days with heart trouble or appendicitis. So it is up to us to shove her into dangers. Perhaps it will be better for her to be hit once by a truck some day than for her to be hit mentally by a truck every day. I feel that Doris is utterly intelligent in showing hypochondriac tendencies; Lord knows anybody with any sense ought to die of fright upon contemplation of life's perils; yet I am strongly in

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

favor of any move which will stifle her intelligence in this direction. I suffer blood-poisoning every time I get a scratch, and I suffer pneumonia every time I catch a little cold, and it is entirely too much suffering to be any fun, and I am strongly in favor of anything which will work reformation along this line in the Herold family. So Doris got her bicycle. I hoped she would run a lot of five-ton trucks into the creek. If she had asked for a barrel in which to ride over Niagara Falls I would have been just as reluctant and just as ready to get it for her. I'd like to see some Herolds start to going over Niagara in barrels. Enough of this trembling and trepidation.

Of course more than half of this good common sense of mine is really Mrs. Herold's. I just follow her around through life picking up hunches that she drops. My regret is that she did not marry me at birth; then I would not have had to go twenty-seven years without any intuitions. Nature is kind in one way, however. Generally speaking, we have no children until we are married, and, therefore, no terribly vital problems to decide until we have the wife to contribute the intuitions necessary to their correct solution.

In most situations logic is no help at all. There is a greater wisdom than logic in almost every case. In most of the fine things of life there is no logic whatsoever; most great human accomplishments, social and mechanical, are based on a sort of inspired silliness and disregard for reason. The thing most to be desired in the world now is a total cessation of warfare among nations; war has always been born of cool, calculating



## DORIS JOINS THE TRAFFIC

logic; we will never have universal peace until one of the larger nations develops such a passionate and intuitive desire for peace that it will take a ridiculous and absurd risk and throw down its arms and say, "There are my implements of war. I may be nutty, but I trust you guys." I, who am a compote of cautions, disbelieve in cautions.

I did bear some resentment, however, toward all the craven parents of Doris' schoolgirl friends. If they had stood up like real men and women and had had the courage and the endurance to deny their children bicycles, we would never have had to buy Doris one. Her strongest argument was that all the other girls had them. Yes, and all the other girls have weak, brainless, spineless parents. One brave, relentless pair of parents in a town might turn the tide properly against the bicycle as a modern institution. But Mrs. Herold and I were darned if we were going to be that pair of parents.

\* \* \*



*"We want you to come and see us a month, Aunt Mat."*

*"But I have a horrid habit of leaving my washrag on the side of the tub."*

my favorite aunt explains her policy

"We want you to come and visit us," we said to my Aunt Mat as she was passing through Bronxville. Aunt Mat is always passing through places. Perhaps it is one of the secrets of her charm.

"I won't," she replied to our invitation. "I don't visit."

"But we really would like for you to come and stay with us for—a month," we urged.

"I'm excruciatingly fond of you. And you seem to like me. Let's let it remain that way. The truth is, I'm a myth. Well, I want to remain a myth. Don't ever invite a myth to your house for a visit. You ask me in a moment of youthful enthusiasm to come and stay at your house a month. That would be fine—for

## MY FAVORITE AUNT EXPLAINS HER POLICY

the first two or three days. You would rush me out and show me the new waterworks and the new mausoleum and take me for a picnic at the falls, and to dinner at the Hilltop Hotel, and to a couple of movies. But about the third day I would begin to pall. You would begin to notice that I took your copy of *The Saturday Evening Post* when you laid it down to go to the telephone, and that I occupied the davenport when you wanted a nap, and that I was busy with my teeth in the bathroom when you wanted to get in. I don't visit. Visiting is vulgar. It is savage. It is a relic of the dark ages. It is a form of torture which civilized folk should not inflict upon each other. Pardon me, I love you youngsters, but I don't visit."

"Why, Aunt Mat, we wouldn't mind any of those things that you mention. And if worse came to worse. we could even blow ourselves to two copies of *The Saturday Evening Post* each week."

"But I would be a much more subtle nuisance than that," replied Aunt Mat. "You two are a happy young married couple with two lovely children. I would love to come to your house and wallow in your happiness with you. But I am almost twice as old as you two and I have two children of my own as old as you are—both married, and both with their own children—and I have made a life study of these things. I wouldn't think of staying at your house longer than overnight—nor at the homes of my own children more than two nights at a time. And then at rare intervals.

"You modern youngsters—if you are any good at all, and not mere lumps of lead—are as sensitive as



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

race horses. You two, for example, have really built up a fine home life. It is not merely an eating and sleeping arrangement. It is a spiritual accomplishment. It is finely attuned, deftly organized. It is poised. It is a delicate and smoothly running mechanism. You have made a great many small adjustments to get things as they are. The four of you get along well together. If I were to come for a visit I would be a stranger in your midst. I would be a spectre—though, perhaps, a very nice sort of spectre—at your spiritual feast. Mine would be a role of spectator at a gathering which there should be no spectator. I would be quiet and diplomatic, but my mere presence in your home life would gently hamper its natural operation. You would be subconsciously annoyed by me. I was young once”—

“But, Aunt Mat”—

“Yes, you would. It’s a hard fact to face, but I am a stranger. Why, one year after my two own children left home, I was a stranger to them. And I realized that I could not dash in on them for a month and take things up where they had been dropped. Every home is a new deal. Every generation is a new deal. Every new family is a new deal. I had my family. That was my deal. I’m not going to try to get in on somebody else’s cards.”

“But, Aunt Mat, isn’t that a rather tough thing to think about?”

“Yes and no. Of course, it would be nicer if relatives could be thick as thieves as long as they live. But early in life I realized that there must come a scatter-

## MY FAVORITE AUNT EXPLAINS HER POLICY

ing time in every family, and that that is a natural phenomenon which should not be frustrated. You know that while there is no one we love as much as our relatives, there is, also, at the same time, no one we hate as much as our relatives. That is why it is my policy to play the part of greased lightning. Most of my relatives like me because all I let them see of me is my tail light and a puff of dust. I began early to train myself for self-sufficiency. I'd like to go visit my children for weeks at a time and devour my grandchildren, but, instead, I'm spending the coming winter in Europe, listening to music. If I go deaf, I can look at pictures. If I go broke, I can make out somehow. But I am resolved to be a person until I croak. Sometime I will come and stay a couple of weeks at a hotel in Bronxville, and we will see a bit of each other, but we won't hang our toothbrushes in the same rack. I'm awfully nice, I'll admit, but I could easily become one too many people. As a rule relatives ought to live five hundred miles apart and stay there, but I am exceptionally sweet, so I think you can stand me at a nearby hotel for a couple of weeks sometime. But I don't know when I can make it. I try to keep myself too busy to visit. Don't build a spare bedroom for me in that new house. The world is so full of people who can't bear the thought of spare bedrooms going unoccupied. A spare bedroom is like a seven-passenger car—somehow there is never any trouble to fill it. And visit not that ye be not visited."

"Aunt Mat"—

"I've been here only a few hours and you can see

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

already that one of my faults is that I want to do all the talking. I have often wondered what it is about relatives. What is the antipathy? I believe it is that we see in our own relatives in an exaggerated form the things we hate in ourselves, and we see in our wife's or husband's relatives in an exaggerated form the things we hate in our wife or husband. Much as a man and woman love each other, there are certain little hates between them. It is to the glory of a good marriage that these little hates can be successfully subdued. And the more highly organized a marriage is and the more sensitive the inmates, the easier it is for a visiting relative to upset the machinery. It is only the gross and the greasy who should visit or be visited. Hotels are one of God's greatest gifts to man. Well, I must be catching the choo choo."

\* \* \*



i get sick of commuting and move back to new york

(November, 1924) Dear Diary: I have suburba-phobia—fear and dread and hatred of suburbs. Avoid the subject of suburbs when you are around me. Don't bring it up. I might scream. I look sane and normal, but don't say suburbs to me.

For four straight years I have won the Pulitzer prize for being the world's worst commuter. If there were trains, I missed them. If there was hot water, I got into it. It took me half my time to commute; the other half I struggled to make a living and hold my little family together. I laugh when I read of the hardships of arctic or tropical explorers. I explored a suburb. Now I have moved back to the heart of New York. Peace has descended on me. I tell my story because it may help others to escape from suburban suffering.

Do you look beneath the surface of the jokes in the funny papers? Last year there were 30,000 suburban commuting jokes. Did you ever stop to figure that where there is so much smoke there must be fire? Jokes are not just made up in people's heads.

I was raised in Bloomfield, Ind. Then I moved to Indianapolis, Ind., then New York. On Sunday I read the New York real estate sections exhorting me to own my own home, to move out to God's good suburbs and get up to my neck in mortgages and ashes and snow.

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I read about rent receipts—how it was not a good thing to have nothing at the end of the year but a stack of useless rent receipts. Everybody knocked New York. Visitors came and said to me, "New York is a nice place to visit, but it is no place to live." Well, compared to Bloomfield, Ind., it isn't. But we can't all live in Bloomfield, Ind. There aren't enough subways there. There aren't enough here, but that is another story.

They said New York was no place to raise children. I learned that the suburbs are no place to raise parents—this parent, at least. I consulted Doris and she said she did not care where she is raised. I care where I am raised.

Statistics (don't ask me to produce them) show that city children are healthier than suburban children. Mrs. Herold says it is because city children are *aired* and suburban children are *exposed*. City children are let loose in beautiful parks under the eye of mothers or nurses. Incidentally, city mothers and nurses are better aired. Suburban children are turned out of doors to the mercy of Nature, and they sit in mud puddles or snow banks and they fall off precipices and fall out of trees, and die off like flies. City children live long. That is one reason why the population of the cities is so much larger than that of the suburban towns.

I can look at any New York man at two o'clock in the afternoon and tell you whether he lives in the city or the suburbs. If he is a suburbanite, he is already under the tension of catching the 5.15. Every move he makes all afternoon is colored by his concern for catch-

## SICK OF COMMUTING, MOVE BACK TO NEW YORK

ing the 5.15. He is just about half a man. (His mornings are ruined, too. All morning he is subsiding from the nervous flurry of catching the 8.40 into town. Trains are not caught subconsciously. It takes the best brains a man has to catch trains. Anyway, it took the best brains I had.)

A Chinese laundryman really lives the ideal life, and we should all approach his system as nearly as possible. He works in one room and lives in the other. He has life about as nearly conquered as it is possible to get it.

New York is no place to live, but if you have to live there, you might as well face the fact. Man cannot serve God and the devil. When I lived in the suburbs I often said: "I live neither in the city nor in the country. I am a geographical hermaphrodite."

Owning one's own home is a sweet idea, but, considering wear and tear and interest on one's investment, it saves you about \$10 a year, net. I hope the man to whom I am trying to sell my house in the suburbs does not read this.

Now I live in the city. I walk to and from my work. I live my life simply within the compass of a few city blocks. I never walked in the country. Automobiles made it too dangerous. I looked at pretty houses and wondered what they cost, compared to mine. When I go to the country now, I ride, and I run over the suburbanites, kill them off with glee in my heart, and I do not think mundanely of homes as piles of money. They are beautiful homes to me—now.

I was raised a small town guy. The only way I can



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stand New York is to reduce it to small town dimensions, get everything within walking distance.

Newspaper real estate sections are free to reprint this in whole or in part any time they please. *Country Life in America* can confiscate it, *House and Garden* can gobble it *verbatim*.

\* \* \*

when we moved from a bronxville house to a  
new york apartment

Most of us of the generation which is just now passing the equator of life were born in houses, and that makes us think of apartments as a little bit unnatural. A little reasoning will show that this is a mistaken and purely superstitious idea. The fact is that the nearer we get to nothing, the nearer we are to Nature, and an apartment is a whole lot nearer nothing than a house. It is just a step from living in an apartment to living in a cave or in a bunch of bushes. Therefore I am satisfied that in moving from a house to an apartment I am getting a little closer to Nature. Hurrah for that!

Another reason for the house dweller's antipathy for apartments is that he is afraid of living so far upstairs. (Most apartments are on the tenth floor or better—the higher the better.) This antipathy too, is entirely primal and can be wiped away with a few words of eloquence. What is there to be afraid of in living on the tenth floor? Falling out? But in the first place you don't fall out, and in the second place if you do fall out, it is not much more annoying to fall ten stories than it is to fall two. Fire? Well, between living in a wooden house that burns up at the slightest touch of a match and living in a steel, brick and concrete fire-proof apartment that won't burn down no matter what you do in the basement, I will take my chances on an apartment every time. One of the greatest pleasures

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about living on the tenth floor of a good apartment house is that you can lean out of your window and watch some family on the fifth floor having a fire and throwing bedclothes and other furnishings out, and rest assured that the fire will never come up to you.

Thousands of people have been mortally injured falling down three or four steps off of back porches, or tumbling down dark cellar stairs, to dozens who have been hurt falling out of apartment windows. There seems to be something about living dangerously high that makes you a little more careful about where you park your center of gravity. You soon learn to keep it inside the window sill.

I know that moving from a house to an apartment has at least one salubrious effect, and this alone is reason enough for everybody to do it once every few years if only for a month or two. Try to get the contents of a ten room house into a six room apartment and you will see in a minute that it cannot be done. It is necessary to discard at least forty per cent of one's belongings, and there is never any mistake in that.

Light housekeeping is generally spoken of hissingly, as if there were any virtue in heavy housekeeping. Until recent years women had a tendency, I am afraid, to do things the hardest way, and many of them still cling to housekeeping martyrdom as a feminine prerogative. Women have actually taken pleasure in chanting the old proverb about women's work being never done; men on the other hand have deeply resented the other half of that old saying that man works from sun to sun and masculine laboring hours have



## WHEN WE MOVED FROM A BRONXVILLE HOUSE

gradually simulated banking hours, and carpenters and plasterers now play golf in the middle of the afternoon in foursomes with brokers. China and glassware are feminine traditions I never could understand; if men had been washing dishes all these centuries we would long ago have had synthetic plates and goblets which could have been put in the garbage after each meal. Apartments are a masculine invention and a feminine blessing.

We are all troubled with TOO MUCH. We take on a canary, for example, without stopping to think of the strength it is going to take to feed it, and clean after it, and nurse it through the diseases of canary childhood. We buy goldfish and geraniums without pausing to reflect the cost in energy that they will demand through years to come. We love them, yes, but we should set a limit on our loves because there are extremes of emotional expenditure beyond which we should not step. How much can we love and care for them COMFORTABLY? In my darkest moments I have sometimes thought that a brass doorknob is all the front yard I want. I have seen brass doorknobs that actually looked LOVED, while most front yards appeal to me as burdens. Give me a brass doorknob and a can of bartender's metal polish and I can get all the outdoor home life I need. If five geraniums in a flower box are all that you can easily water and groom, then you don't need a garden full of flowers and weeds.

The biggest advantage of all, in an apartment over a house, is then, as I see it, that it helps keep you from biting off more home life than you can chew.

then i defend new york as a place to live

(*November, 1925.*) Meredith Nicholson, that excellent Indiana writer, is the author of a warm article entitled "Stay in Your Own Home Town." He paints the joys of loitering at the corner grocery store in Indianapolis, and of borrowing money (if you ever happen to get broke) of some friend on the station platform, and of other of the dear daily adventures of existence in a smaller city. It makes me yearn to go back to live in Indianapolis.

But New York is not all bad. Let me take yesterday, for example.

To begin with, I got a cordial greeting from the elevator boy in our apartment house.

"Good morning, Mr. Herold," he said.

"Good morning, Roy," I answered.

"It's lots cooler this morning," he said.

"We'll soon be having winter," I replied.

Now, you will have to go a good piece in any town to get better conversation than that.

Then I dropped into the corner book store on a small errand. "Good morning, Mr. Herold," said the sweet and charming woman who runs the place. And I believe we discussed the weather. Then to the little stationery store where I buy my morning papers. This place is a bit more New Yorkey, and would no doubt

## DEFEND NEW YORK AS A PLACE TO LIVE

give Meredith Nicholson virulent nostalgia. It gave me exactly that when I first moved to that neighborhood. It is the dirtiest, most ill-kept little store I have ever seen in the world. Mrs. Herold says it must have got ahead of the storekeeper one day years ago, (perhaps a Jewish holiday) and he never caught up.

I first thought the tiny Jewish storekeeper, who sleeps on a pile of old Tribunes in the corner, was the dumbest, coldest human sardine I had ever seen. But after going into that place for several months, I have found that the storekeeper and I have an understanding. He never says "Good morning." He often says nothing. But there is something about the way he gives me change or answers some question of mine that makes our morning meeting entirely satisfactory. I get some sort of glow out of this little dry carcass of a more than typical New York storekeeper. Furthermore I have seen that this fellow has a pretty good family life. Sometimes his wife runs the place, sometimes his boy, sometimes his fat little girl. This is the New York that you cannot learn, that you can hardly come to endure unless you have lived here a long time.

Well, to go on through the day.

I have a work room in a club a few blocks from my home. I always get a pretty fine "Good morning" from the redheaded girl at the desk and from the man at the cigar counter. When I got up to my room I found a note from Sam Cushing. He had wanted me to go to the theatre with him last night. About 11:30 Bob Brinkerhoff dropped in. He wanted to know all about the children, and I wanted to hear about his



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boy at school. Then we strolled over to a Tuesday lunch club. It is not supposed to meet in the summer time, but a bunch of the members get together there that I know by first names. I sat between Bob Dickey the dog artist, and Fred Kelly the writer. Bob Dickey and I talked about the advantages of girl babies over boy babies. (His are granddaughters.) Fred told me about a dam he built on his farm this summer. After lunch I walked over to the Pennsylvania station with Norman Lynd.

After five o'clock I walked down to Gramercy Park and wheeled the baby, and stopped and compared baby notes with Mrs. Herb Roth. We know almost everybody in the Park and when it threatened rain, there were sixteen of us—fathers, mothers, and kids—who walked home together. Doris and Sammy St. John had their bicycles. I stopped in a few minutes at Newberry's to see some new kodak pictures of Ann. (Three years old.) She calls me Herold, and I call her Newberry.

The day could not have been any more Bloomfield or any more Indianapolis if I had been in Bloomfield or in Indianapolis. It takes a few years to make Bloomfield out of New York, but if you can weather the nostalgia of the first years, it can be done.

If I had had to borrow money yesterday, I think I could have managed it, and if I had had to have a funeral I think I could have got a few customers—enough, anyway.

Towns are not so different. You can have Bloomfield or Indianapolis almost anywhere if that is what

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you want—and I do. I am like Meredith Nicholson to that extent. I want to live in Indiana, but I have to do it in New York.

\* \* \*

When I was a kid and first helped my mother with the dishes I used to wash and dry each dish about twenty minutes. I also recall that when I first started to bathe myself I would spend a quarter of an hour on each knee, for example. I was entirely too idealistic, and dish-washing and bathing were interminable tasks for me.

This is an exact picture of the reformer type of mind. It has somehow failed to grow up. The normal adult knows that life has to be lived a little dirty.

\* \* \*

There is much satisfaction in having a pair of bed slippers which are exactly the same—that is, which are neither right nor left. There is nothing more annoying than to have to make a choice of your bed slippers, to have to use discrimination when you are two-thirds asleep, anyway. No, give me every time, the bed slipper that is self-selecting, sexless, and universal.

\* \* \*



i have my tonsils out

It may have been just a whim. My sister in Hammond wrote me that she would rather have another baby than have her tonsils out again, but she takes things tragically. And there they were, and they were something that could be taken out, so why not have them out? It was something to do in a dull world. I didn't have much else to do.

Road shows are not much good any more, and the talkies keep us home from the movies, and I don't play bridge. I considered taking a trip and I brought home folders and studied them for a few weeks, but I am like the girl who *had* a book; I've *had* a trip.

Two tonsil gazers told me not to have them out, so I hunted until I found two other doctors who told me



## I HAVE MY TONSILS OUT

I should have them out at once. I cast the deciding vote, making it three to two against the tonsils. In these matters of medicine and surgery, I believe in shopping around awhile before buying. Make up your



mind what ails you and hunt for a doctor who will give you what you want.

I surveyed the field carefully and found that, while tonsil operations kill a few people, most patients are neither helped nor harmed by them. This seemed fair enough, and the fact is that you probably risk your

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life more definitely in crossing a city street than you do in crossing a pair of tonsils. You can't worry every time you step off a curb or skip across the threshold of a hospital. If you are going to have some fun, you have to take some risks.

I got a great deal of encouragement from tonsil alumni. Everybody who has had his tonsils out wants you to have yours out, just as everybody who is married wants you to get married. People, almost total strangers, who didn't even take the trouble to look at my tonsils, advised me to have them out, by all means. You never make a mistake in having a tonsil out, seems to be the general idea among the tonsil-shorn. I met just one tonsil graduate who said it didn't do him any good, but I know this fellow well and you could count on him to crab anything you wanted to do. Nothing would do this particular bird any good.

I had a sort of Bert Williams feeling in my feet and about as much enthusiasm for life as the more depressed of the Two Black Crows, and my physiological intuition pointed to tonsils. And I have had a sore throat every other day for going onto fifteen or twenty years. I had half-heartedly had three teeth pulled, knowing in my soul of souls that that was barking up the wrong tree, and saying to myself, even in the dental chair, that "this is neither here nor there—what I *want* is my tonsils *out!*"

So one day, after a session with my favorite tonsil fancier, I said, "All right, doc, I'll come down in a few days and let you cut yourself a piece of throat. What day do you say?"

## I HAVE MY TONSILS OUT

"What about Tuesday?"

"Check!"

Monday night I had that thrilled, expectant feeling that always precedes a big day, but I was at the hospital bright and early Tuesday morning, believing that punctuality in tonsillectomy is, as in most other affairs, nine points of the law. I went immediately to bed, which always seems a silly thing to do, sober, at eight o'clock in the morning, and a nice nursie gave me a shot of morphine in the arm, and it was not long until I did not care whether it was my tonsils or President Colidge's which were about to be sent back to their Maker. Any parental feeling I had towards those tonsils was completely banished by that shot of morphine.

This was, I believe, in an Episcopal hospital. I never go to a hospital without reflecting on the inadequacy of Atheists and Skeptics when there is any real organized work to be done. You have never heard of any Atheists and Skeptics Mercy Hospital, have you? No, those babies, bright as they may be in an intellectual brawl, are not much shucks at getting together to do some good in the world. Of course, there are probably a lot of agnostics among the M. D.'s on the staff of even the Episcopalian Hospital I was patronizing, but the Episcopalians are smart enough not to ask their doctors what they think outside of their professional cerebration. (My doctor believes in Santa Claus, I have decided after receiving his bill.)

With a local anesthetic and a doctor who knows his midiron, there is no more to a tonsil operation than



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there is to a haircut—if anything, the conversation is more interesting. The record they put on the delivery-room phonograph was exceptionally pleasant; I was a “very good patient” and my tonsils were “unusually bad.” This makes better listening than comment on the new Chevrolet Six.



And aside from the sensation of having a child's three-inch alphabetical building block in one's throat for a few days, the after-effects are no bother at all. When things begin to tune up, the nurse should mix you a little bit of water with ten grains of aspirin and an equal amount of bicarbonate of soda and this should be gargled for five or ten minutes. Your end of the conversation for a day or two will consist of "Unh-

## I HAVE MY TONSILS OUT

hunh" or "Hunh-unh," but it is not a bad thing thus to take the conversational veil for a short time. And a writing pad at the bedside will accommodate your more violent comments, if you have any. Do not leave the hospital until the baby is two or three days old, and do not try to do your own housework until the little fellow is a couple of weeks old.

As to results, I had, after six weeks had passed, that schoolgirl buoyancy which once characterized my every waking moment. I wouldn't any more have tonsils than I would have stalactites or stalagmites—or are those the names of two of the three famous Biblical characters? If you have tonsils, away with them. It's a lot of fun, having these little *opéra bouffe* operations. If life seems drab and drear, have yourself a little operation. Darn it, I wish I hadn't had those two impacted molars out years ago! If I have any more fun in the operation field, it looks as if I would have to have some major work. They tell me an appendectomy is a perfect circus.

\* \* \*



*"I'll never get anywhere until I shake off the shackles of this shiftless habit of hard work."*

### I take up good hard laziness

There has been a lot of hokum in regard to work. Millionaires say there is just one recipe for success and that it is "good hard work," but any millionaire with a grain of sense knows down deep in his soul that no human being could possibly work hard enough to make the difference between \$5,000 a year and \$100,000 a year. If a man is working eight hours a day and making \$5,000 a year, he can't work 160 hours a day to make



## I TAKE UP GOOD HARD LAZINESS

\$100,000 a year. The truth is that most fortunes are made by men with character enough to resist work.

Work is waste.

I have experimented with work and I have experimented with laziness, and I have figured that if I am a flat failure in this world it will be because I have a weakness for work. Heaven knows that I know better and that I try in my frail human way to live up to my creed of laziness, but I slip back again and again and falter into pathways of diligence. Idleness is my ideal, but it always seems just around the corner.

However, I am better about my idleness than I used to be, and any small success I achieve will be the result of wanting, wanting with all my heart, to be no account in this world. I used to work all day and part of the night, but now I work mornings only and I am doing infinitely better than I used to do. I shudder when I think how I used to work. My! My! If I had gone on working as hard as I used to work I would have been a great economic loss to the world and of little economic use to myself or family. In the first place, I would probably have died in five years. My family doctor said: "If you don't let up on work it will be only a matter of months until you are in your mausoleum." This was too good to believe, so I went to several specialists to have it confirmed. I told them what I wanted confirmed and they confirmed it. So on this expensive advice, I cut down my work to three hours a day. It looks now as if I might live forty years longer. By loafing or playing three hours a day for five years

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

I will gain thirty-five years of life. This is an example of the wonders of the mathematics of laziness.

The more cheering phase of the situation is that I can make more money by working a fraction of the day than I used to make by working all day. It spirits me up to know that I won't have to work in the afternoon, and this enables me to put more zest into my work in the morning. And zest is what I have to sell. If you have noticed more zest in my writing and drawing the past few months, it is living testimony to the beneficial results of laziness. It is not yeast or agar. It is the result of my afternoons off. Gosh, what stuff I could turn out if I took ALL DAY off. I have tasted the fruits of indolence, and I hope to go further. If I can ever summon myself to a complete cessation of work what masterpieces I will spawn.

There is a new simplicity in my writing and in my drawing. A new vigor. In everything I do now there is evidence of my desire to get through and go play golf or ride horseback. Of course, now and then I let my old conscientious carefulness get the better of me and my work becomes momentarily marked with tedium, but for the most part it is now characterized by a fine, free slap-dash.

Play is divine. Children play. Lions and tigers and gazelles and deer and does and shadroe and kittens and fish and birds all play. None of these keeps office hours or punches a clock. And who will say that they do not live better lives than Senators or mechanics or other slaves of the treadmill.

Take Senators. Look what they accomplish by all

## I TAKE UP GOOD HARD LAZINESS

their hard work. Hard, conscientious oratory. Dozens of diligent Senators all neutralizing each other's efforts. All getting up an exhibition sweat. This country would be far better off if the entire Senate went fishing at the beginning of every session and stayed fishing until the end of the session. How can we get less work out of our Senate? There surely must be some one in that great governing body great enough to lead it in laziness, now that I have called attention to the need for it. Who will lead the Senate into green pastures?

I have mentioned mechanics. Even the brighter of these have learned the futility of work. Mr. Ford, if no one else, has showed them that labor is but vanity. He has demonstrated that they could accomplish more in a five-day week than in a six-day week. Hours of the mill used to be from 6 to 6. Ford gave mechanics a seven-hour day, and they did more than in a ten or twelve-hour day. And, for almost a year he went even to greater extremes. The no-hour day. And you saw the beneficial results. The Ford output was reduced to no cars per day, and humanity was blessed.

Business men must learn it. Years ago the so-called flat-top, clean-top desk came into vogue, but there was a catch in it. Desks still have drawers. Business men make a pretense of laziness, but they will not really succeed until they reduce their desks to drawerless tables, and keep away from them! I was once a business man and had a desk. I know how easy it is to sit down at a desk and work like fury answering unimportant correspondence and cleaning out drawers, and wearing



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

my secretaries down to shadows of their former selves. I sometimes made as much as ten dollars a day with this great expenditure of effort. It is a whole lot easier to do this than it is to sit at a desk and do nothing and make fifty dollars an hour.

Most of the damage in this world is done by workers.

Yet school teachers and editorial writers and preachers preach the glory of work.

When will we begin to bring our children up to ways of laziness?

What a world this would be if nobody worked!

Some day some lazy guy will think up a way to end war. Think of the work that will save. War is one of the greatest enemies of universal laziness. We build things up and have a war and tear them all down and have to do them over again.

The world has tried good hard work and not got very far. Let's see what will happen if it tries good hard laziness.

\* \* \*

i decide to be less systematic

Up until a few years ago I was the most orderly civilian outside of West Point. When I was born they must have put me in the drawer of a filing cabinet, and the nurse must have bumped my head on the corner of the cabinet, for I have never been quite right since my babyhood. All my life I have slaved to keep things arranged in rows and columns. I have been alphabetical and chronological. I have kept the big bottles on the left-hand side of the shelves in my medicine chest shading down to the short bottles on the right. I have kept my shoes in rows in the closet. I have been nice and neat all my life.

Even as a boy I was my parents' pride for system. I remember I even made my own bed because I did not want anybody stirring up my room. I had places for everything, and everything in its place. I had a pigeon-holed desk that I earned selling Larkin soaps, and I had certain things for certain pigeon-holes. Even as a boy I was a filer and classifier.

I was a little stoop-shouldered, and my family thought it might straighten me up if they sent me to a military school. This was a great mistake, because I came out more orderly and systematic than I went in. I learned to stack handkerchiefs in perfect alignment in bureau drawers. I learned to pile shirts, socks, neck-

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

ties and underwear in piles that were a joy to the eye. I came out of that military school about as much of an old maid as it is possible for a boy to get. I have been an old maid all my life.

Yet I do not think I have been a sissy. I have been too mean for that, and I have cussed a lot. I learned profanity early in life, and it has been one of my saving graces through all the years. I recall when I first discovered its beauties. I was a mere lad, and I was sent to patch up the coal bin in the basement. I attempted to nail a two-and-a-half-inch oak plank to a two-by-four post with a seven-inch spike and a ten-cent hammer. This brought out my first great masculine oath, and I have used profanity constantly ever since.

As I grew up I became more and more addicted to filing cases, ledgers, rolltop desks and other modern efficiency paraphernalia. I made a great hobby of keeping clippings, letters, trivial papers and memoranda, so that I could find anything I wanted on a second's notice in the dark of night. I knew ten days ahead of every insurance policy expiration.

Then one day I realized that ALL THIS was getting me nowhere.

I decided to go to the bad.

I realized that I was cultivating a lot of thirty-dollar-a-week attributes—I who longed to be a hundred-thousand-dollar-a-year man. I looked about me and discovered that all big men are sloppy in their methods.

I decided that the secret of being a big man is not to know where anything is and not to know what is going on. Big executives are big because they don't care



## I DECIDE TO BE LESS SYSTEMATIC

a darn what's happening. I used to keep my pencils all sharpened for an emergency, and each evening I put my desk in shipshape order before quitting for the night. I had a basket for papers to be filed, and every seventh day I had a filing orgy. But I looked about me and saw that big men never sharpen their pencils and never file anything, and don't know much. Some of them don't know there is any such thing as an alphabet, in the first place. How are you going to be a big executive if you know anything about your business? Do you suppose the president of General Motors knows or cares when I bought a Chevrolet? No. He was probably out playing golf that afternoon.

All right, I am going to be out playing golf a lot of afternoons. The General Motors Company can go to pot, for all I care. I am going to be like Alfred Sloan. I don't even care if there is an "e" on the end of Sloan.

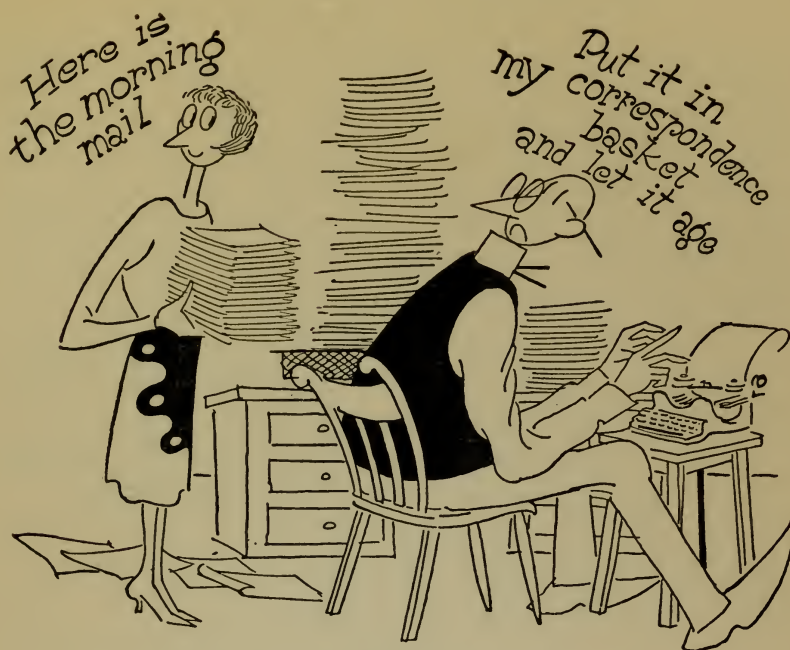
Now I spend a lot of time hunting for things, but not half as much time as I used to spend putting them away where I wouldn't have to hunt for them. A lot of things are better off lost, anyway. Frequently I throw a necktie on the floor, and I don't care who picks it up. I'll let Mrs. Herold or the Lord or somebody see that it gets back to a bureau drawer, and I don't care which drawer. I leave carbon copies, drawing, letters and bills lying around all over my room when I quit work. Never would I have done that in the old days. My motto now is to let nature take its course. Things can file themselves. The rest of my life I am going to be disorderly enough to make up for a misspent systematic youth.

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

I save ten thousand kilowatts of nervous energy a week by my new disorderliness. I am going to live a lot longer than I would have lived, and, who knows, I may some day be president of General Motors, if I keep on getting careless?

If I do, I am not going to worry about little things like Chevrolets.

\* \* \*



some neglected correspondence

People would not ask a paper hanger to hang paper for pleasure, or socially, yet they are constantly asking a writing guy to write letters. And circumstances demand a certain amount of correspondence of us all. The government, for example, is now on terms of such disgusting intimacy with each of us that we must keep up a constant flow of letters to the income tax department and other irritating governmental branches.

I, personally, answer letters the neglect of which might cause me to get arrested, and I put all my other mail in a basket for future attention, and leave it there until the senders die off, or until the letters so deposited have answered themselves.



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

This is wrong and inhuman. I would like to write more letters. Underneath, I am as kind as they come, maybe. But when I sit at my typewriter it is usually with the realization that I am weeks behind with my magazine work, and one does not write to, say Wilber Allison, an old college friend, when the wolf is having whooping cough, thus, at one's door.

This morning came the dawn and the bright idea of combining with the pleasure of writing some letters the pain of producing a chapter for this book.

First I must attend to a little letter which Mrs. Herold has been urging on me for several weeks:

*Ingersoll Watch Co.,  
Waterbury, Conn.*

*Dear Sirs*—Please quote me on gross lots of second-hand Ingersolls. My little daughter, Hildegarde, eats six a day, and they are hard to obtain in this neighborhood. Do you recommend boiling them before feeding them to babies?

*Yours truly,*

*Elmer Oliphant,  
Supervisor, Group Insurance Division,  
Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.,  
New York.*

*Dear "Catchie"*—Yes, I am the Don Herold who used to live in Bloomfield, Indiana, when you and I were about six or seven years old. I watched your football career at Purdue and West Point with interest,

SOME NEGLECTED CORRESPONDENCE

and have bragged many times that you used to sit on my chest and pound my nose in encounters at recess and after school. It was a delight to hear from you out of a clear sky, and you bet we will have lunch together the next time I am in New York. I hope it was not I who sat on *your* chest and pounded *your* nose. No, I am sure the other way round is correct. Well, we will not quarrel now about that.

*Hoping to see you soon,*

*H. T. Webster,  
Stamford, Conn.*

*Dear Webby*—You and I being two of the country's most enthusiastic Mark Twain fans, I think I should report to you as follows: Yesterday afternoon I thought I would drive to Redding Center, Conn., and see if I could find the foundations of the big house in which Mark Twain used to live there. You will recall that the house burned down after Mark moved away. Imagine my surprise, yesterday, on finding the house there just as Mark Twain left it!

Somebody has just rebuilt it exactly as it was when Mark Twain used to be its occupant.

It was a tedious job, finding the place. It was up and down some of the windingest hills over which I have ever motored, and hid away in some of the hilliest hills I have ever tackled. First I came to Redding Center which, I think, is the loveliest little village I have ever seen, and then to Four Corners, on one corner of which is the library that Mark Twain gave to the

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

countryside. The library was closed, but there was a man working in the garden at the rear who might have been the librarian. At any rate, he had a haircut, or lack of it, exactly like Mark Twain's. Then down and up some of the darndest dirt roads in the world. Mark Twain was indeed fleeing successfully from his "damned human race" when he chose that neighborhood.

I was trespassing, so I could not blame the stately lady on the porch for scaring all conversation out of me. I wanted to ask so much—how she happened to do it—who she was. I must get up courage and go back and get more information and write you again. *Sincerely,*

*Federated Life Insurance Co.,  
Chicago, Ill.*

*Dear Sirs*—Some time ago I wrote you that my policy in your company is with a trust company and asking if it would be possible for you to send me a duplicate "specimen" policy to keep at home for reference. I have your letter stating that since my original policy has not been lost you are "not in a position" to supply me a "specimen" duplicate. Two larger companies than yours have been glad to comply with my request. An insurance company should regard every policyholder as a prospect for future business and render every possible accommodation. Please do not regard me as such from now on. And kindly tell your president not to send me any more of his multi-graphed sentimental birthday greetings. *Yours truly.*



SOME NEGLECTED CORRESPONDENCE

*Mrs. Clarence Clark*  
*115 West Fourth St.,*  
*Bayonne, N. J.*

*Dear Mrs. Clark*—I note there is some dispute as to the birthday date of your son, Clarence Daniel, Jr. The hospital says he was born on the twenty-sixth, but you and the doctor, who use daylight saving time, say he was born at 11.05 p. m. on the twenty-fifth. Hospitals are getting a little too smart-Aleck about babies, and if I were you I would remind them that, after all, it is mothers and not hospitals which give birth to babies. This particular controversy, it seems to me, should be settled entirely by you. You know what kind of time you were using when you gave birth to the baby, and you are the one to say when the baby was born. However, if there is any doubt in your mind as to the date, give the kid a couple of birthdays. It isn't often that kids get the chance to have double-header events of this sort. He can fill in blanks as follows, the rest of his life: Clarence Clark, Jr., born June 25 and 26, 1916. *Yours truly,*

*Wilbur Allison,*  
*Spencer, Indiana.*

*Dear Wilbur*—When you and I were in college together and I was setting my eyes on New York, I thought there was something wrong with you in setting your eyes on Spencer, Indiana. I could not see why you should want to go back and settle down in your father's big store on the public square. I have been in New York for years trying to find some niche in which

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

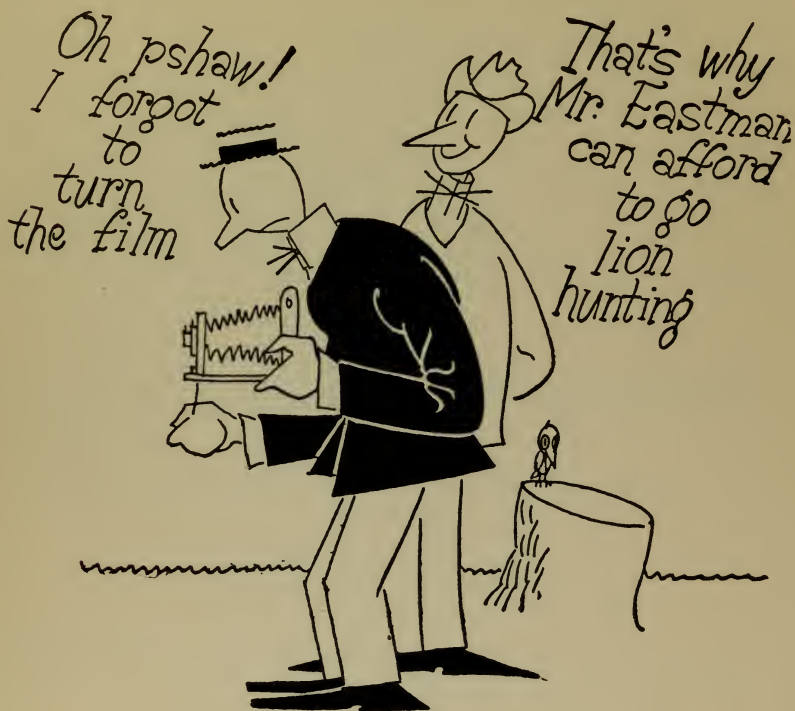
life would feel like an old shoe, and as the years have passed, you have become a romantic figure to me, and your kind of life has come to appear to me as the romantic life. Seven-tenths of my existence is devoted to adjusting details which were all settled for you, even in your college days when you knew where you were going to live and what you were going to do. Shelter and sustenance were even then subconscious matters for you. Fresh air was assured you for life. You knew where your kids, if any, would go to school. You knew where, if any, you would play golf. You knew where you were going to eat lunch every day. All of these things have to be gone into deeply almost every morning by the inhabitant of a big city, and we cliff dwellers or commuters have little time left to contemplate and ripen. You, running a store, may think it must be great to write, and draw cartoons, but, after all, writing and cartooning are just other forms of storekeeping. You probably love gingham as well as I love white paper and bristol board, and we both have to sell our stuff by the yard to somebody. I sorta wish I had known in my college days that I was going back to Bloomfield, Indiana, and settle down for life in my father's little bank. *Sincerely,*

*Mr. George Eastman,  
Eastman Kodak Co.,  
Rochester, N. Y. (Please forward)*

*Dear Mr. Eastman*—It will increase the pleasure of your jungle hunting trip to know that I took seven blanks out of twelve possible exposures last week, using

SOME NEGLECTED CORRESPONDENCE

Kodak film exclusively. This sort of thing is going on all over America all the time. *Hoping you are having better luck with your shots,*



"Life,"  
New York.

Dear "Life"—I have heard a good deal of talk about the superiority of *Punch* over our American humorous publications, and take no stock in it. For one thing, there is very little humor in *Punch* illustrations. If we took an issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* and put jokes under the pictures, we would have *Punch*. To



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

my mind, a humorous illustration must be more than photographic; it must be *abstract*. Lord knows there is enough anatomy in the world already. My idea of a funny picture is one of figures not quite human doing entirely human things—in short, *abstraction*. French and German comic artists have a facility for this abstraction, and we have a number of boys here in America who have it. The English as a rule know absolutely nothing about it. *Yours,*

\* \*



*"He's starting again to rave about California climate."*

*"Doesn't he know there are gentlemen present?"*

then we decided to move to los angeles

The weather has always seemed to me to be a little bit private and personal—a matter pretty much between a man and his Maker—like his baths, for example. I have never cared to discuss it much with other people. It has always embarrassed me somewhat. I would just as soon get into a conversation about digestion as into a weather talk.

So you can imagine my embarrassment when I first moved to California, where they don't talk about anything else but climate.

Climate, out here, is not merely discussed—it is

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

pawed over—torn to shreds—searched for new and hidden and forbidden meanings and delights—it is a pagan orgy—a thing consuming and almost terrible.

I do my best to avoid it. "How do you like California?" they ask me. After some experience I have hit on a reply which halts them for a while. "I like everything in California but the climate," I answer, and the blasphemy of it strikes them cold with silence until I can escape.

And the truth is that California climate is really not so bad. As climates go, it is good enough. But practically anything—mineral, vegetable or animal—can be considered so intensively that it becomes obnoxious and almost vulgar. Take soup, for example. I like soup as well as anybody and thoroughly appreciate its healing and medicinal properties, but I maintain that even soup should not be made the ruling passion of one's life. I might go so far as to say to a hostess: "That was good soup we had for dinner," but I would not be one to beguile her into the conservatory for an entire evening's conversation about her soup and its ramifications. I wouldn't want to sit around and lyricize it for three hours, comparing it ingredient by ingredient with every other soup I had tasted for a year, and considering its beneficial effects upon the ear, nose and throat. Well, that's how they handle climate in California. You would think out here there was nothing else in life to live and breathe for than California climate.

I contend that while these baser necessities of life



## THEN WE DECIDED TO MOVE TO LOS ANGELES

may be taken with epicurean relish, they should not be thought about to a point of perversion.

There is just about so much that a normal person can get out of soup and just about so much that a normal person can get out of climate, but Californians get more than that out of their climate.

California should recognize immediately that its climate is a peril more dreadful in its potentialities than its earthquakes, its fires, its motion picture industry or its realtors. The state Legislature should make it a misdemeanor to mention climate out here for five years. Nothing less drastic can save beautiful California from its pathological drift.

The disease gradually disintegrates the strongest minds. Even Harry Carr, a somewhat intelligent writer on *The Los Angeles Times*, shows symptoms, now, of the tertiary stage of California climatitis. Thus we find him recently quoting Aldous Huxley that all California women are beautiful, when he knows perfectly well that most California women are sunburned to a wrinkled and homely crisp. Sunshine soon reaches a point of diminishing returns as an aid to woman's beauty.

Mr. Carr also quotes Mrs. Annie Besant's statement to some club women that a new super race is being created here in the Southwest. You see, they get to thinking climate capable of even the most miraculous things. Harry Carr knows as well as I that the population of the Southwest is for the most part, by the time it arrives here, far past the point of contributing even numerically to any race, let alone a super race.

## renting a furnished house in los angeles

"This is the living room."

When we arrived in California, we started out to look for a furnished house to rent.

When you are looking for a furnished house to rent nine housewives out of ten start out by saying, "This is the living room. And this is the fireplace."

"I suppose it doesn't smoke?" ventured Mrs. Herold.

"Oh, no. We enjoy it so much. Not that we need it when the furnace is going. We have an excellent furnace. My sister from Milwaukee was here all last winter and she said she never saw a more comfortable house, and she is quite delicate. But we like a fire in the fireplace now and then, just to look at."

"They have pretty cold winters in Milwaukee," I offered.

"Now, this is the dining room. And this is the pantry. And this is the kitchen—a big, airy kitchen, with plenty of light. And this is the maid's room. And this is the maid's bath. And this is the stairway. This is a bathroom. And this is our bedroom. My husband died in this room. (A selling point.) And this is my daughter's bedroom. She is in college now. And this is another bath. And this is another bedroom. And this is another. You see, all the closets are big and roomy. We like big closets. This is the stairway to

## RENTING A FURNISHED HOUSE IN LOS ANGELES

the attic. We haven't finished it yet. I have never rented my house before. But it seems so big. You see, I am all alone since my husband died and my daughter went to college and my son took a position with the telephone company in Stockton."

"Well, we thank you very much. Perhaps we will be back and look at it again this afternoon.

"That one was pretty awful," said Mrs. Herold when we were outside.

"This is the living room," I said with a gesture across the lawn. "Let's take the first house that has no living room. In fact, I'm so cockeyed looking for a place to live that I am going to flop down on the first comfortable davenport we come to and rent the place without looking at it."

We rang another doorbell.

"May we look at your house?"

"Well, it isn't in very good shape now. We have been so busy packing that the place is rather torn up now. But I guess you can look through if you will excuse appearances. We are clean underneath."

When we had looked through and seen the usual disorder on the dresser tops and dishes in the sink I said: "Another alibi housekeeper. I'll bet that house is as clean right now as it ever is."

We rang another doorbell.

The woman said: "Just look around for yourselves." She disappeared and we roamed through, selling the house to ourselves. There was too much furniture, but since nobody was with us, we decided we could unfur-



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

nish it to some extent, putting this chair and that parlor lamp and that Watt's "Hope" in the attic.

The place was spic and span. The closets were clean as a pin. There were big piles of clean linen and towels. It was a large, comfortable house, old but well kept. After returning down stairs we came upon the woman sitting passively on the back porch. She said: "I have taken it for granted that you are interested in the house, and not me."

"May I look at the garage?" I asked.

"Surely. You might sweep it while you are out there." That was the nearest she came to an alibi, and it was rather a courageous and bantering alibi which I did not mind.

Most people have it in them to do everything abjectly, but some can do everything regally, even to renting their homes furnished.

Mrs. Herold and I had a little secret session.

"We'll take the place," I announced to the woman at the conclusion of our conference.

\* \* \*

You have seen little of life until you have been a dentist, doctor, lawyer or rented yourself a furnished house. And the latter may be the most illuminating of all. You see into closets, and you see people seeing you see into their closets. Are they brave about it, or are their faces full of whimpering apology? You learn the tragedy or the lark responsible for the house being in the furnished house market. In one home we saw five baby pictures all in one frame. All grown and

## RENTING A FURNISHED HOUSE IN LOS ANGELES

flown now. A lonesome woman in too big a house. In another there were plans afoot for a three months' motor trip across the continent. Fun ahead there.

I thank God I did not marry the managerial and possessive type of woman. "Yes, this is a comfortable house, because I built it myself. This is my living room. This is my fireplace. I have two daughters in Vassar. I am moving back to Cleveland. My husband is going into the advertising business there. That's my garage out there—a two-car garage. That's my tennis court. I am having the men here next week to reseed my lawn." Before you are gone a husband comes out of the pantry, where he has been drinking himself a cocktail.

The cocktail which he has just drunk is one thing which he knows can never be hers.



### creative ecstasy

I have arrived at a point in life where sitting down to a typewriter or to a drawing board is far less tempting to me than sitting in a dentist's chair. The truth is, it would be a great relief to me to burst out with a toothache right now and have to go to a dentist's to get it ground out. There would be some sensation in that. Sitting here, working, I am just numb. You could stick pins in me and I wouldn't know it. If I knew it, it would amuse me. I wish somebody would come and drive nails in me. Why, sometimes I think it would be a relief to be appointed to the Chair of Electricity in Sing Sing University.

They talk about the tired business man. He's tired at the close of day. What I am talking about is the tired writing or cartooning man. He is tired at the



## CREATIVE ECSTASY

dawn of day. I have known a host of him and I have yet to meet any but a few romantic neophytes who wouldn't trade their jobs for a job cracking rocks—if the pay were the same. Well, at least, they brag that they would.



And yet people say: "My! Your work must be fascinating."

Just the other day I went up to the Pasadena office of Earl Derr Biggers for lunch and an afternoon of golf. As he closed his typewriter and put on his hat he said: "It's torture, isn't it?"

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Now, I am, comparatively speaking, a beginner, and I imagine that the better you are the worse it gets. At the start, there is the thrill of selling. If the professions I am discussing have any thrill at all for their practitioners it is the thrill of marketing, and this makes them exactly equal to any other manufacturing,



jobbing, wholesaling, or retailing business. So you can search me if there is any sharp line between Sinclair Lewis and George Babbitt; one peddles lots of words and the other peddles lots.

And Babbitt has the better of it, by far; by far the better of it, from the standpoint of enjoying life. He comes down to the office in the morning and subjects himself to myriad outside stimuli. A pile of letters to

## CREATIVE ECSTASY

answer, phone calls to make, deals to push along, a secretary to boss him, a world to tease him to work, people to bother him beautifully all day long. He does stuff that I do when I am too spineless to work. I have to bloody my nose every morning to keep myself from answering letters, negotiating telephone calls, and otherwise making a live wire out of myself. If somebody were to announce to me that I had just been appointed president of General Motors, I'd feel like a kid out of school.



I sit down in front of a piece of blank paper or cardboard and I have to make Something grow where Nothing grew before. And you just get a gang of writers or cartoonists together and get them a little tight and they'll all admit that they are getting away with murder in their work, but they'll contend that it is justifiable murder.



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

At present I am working in a five-room apartment in which I have nothing but a table and a chair. There is no telephone. Nobody but Mrs. Herold knows the address, and she is to use it only in case I don't come home for three days and she can no longer suppress her curiosity as to whether or not I am over here dead. I have no books or magazines. I have no pictures on the wall. (One of my greatest weaknesses is getting up to straighten pictures.) I haven't even a nail file. Just a \$3.50 table and a \$2 chair. I have no pride or interest whatever in the place. It's the only sort of place in which I can get work out, and it works fine, except that I won't come over here very often and when I come I won't stay.

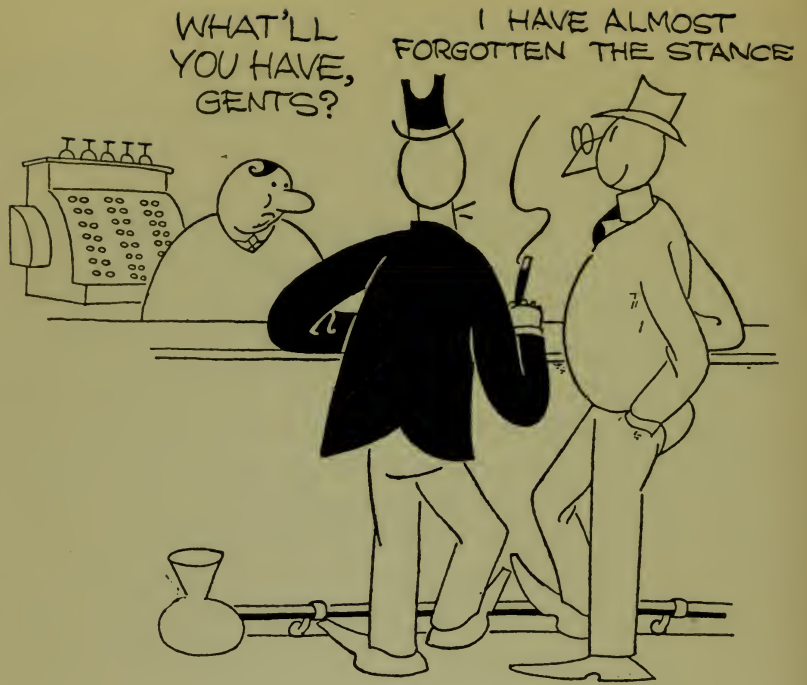
I have tried working at home, in offices, clubs, hotels, towers, basements, garages, stables. I have tried chewing gum, raisins, dried figs, Baby Ruths; I have tried paprika hypodermics, caffeine injections, and all-day suckers. Nothing helps. I'd drink myself to death like Edgar Allan Poe if I had the health; it takes a strong constitution to do that with the liquor we get nowadays. I have sometimes wondered if music would help. Movie stars seem to work better if four or five musicians are playing as they act. It would take a symphony orchestra to make me like my labor. I have thought of attaching myself to some Polar expedition. I know I must stay out of warm climates; California is pure chloroform to me. At any rate, I must travel. Perhaps Paris would stir me for a week or two. I've always felt I could work fine in a storm at sea; one of my troubles is that I am not in enough storms at sea. I

## CREATIVE ECSTASY

must look into the gland situation in Vienna. Maybe I could enjoy my work if I were on the desert and rode a camel six or eight hours a day and worked about two hours between jaunts.

Everybody I know has much the same trouble. Ellis Parker Butler can't keep from whittling when he wants to work, and he has built up a big banking business just because he is too weak to concentrate. Donald Ogden Stewart has a sort of eczema to which he yields, much to the injury of his art. Bob Benchley can hardly wait for the annual arrival of the hay-fever season so he can sit and sneeze instead of composing. H. T. Webster has nine pipes and it takes him nine hours to draw a two-hour cartoon. Fontaine Fox has a drawing board with handcuffs on it. Darling hates his work. Kin Hubbard gets to work at seven a. m. and quits at eight a. m. Percy Crosby hasn't been in the same city for more than three days at a time for the last three years. John Held, Jr., enjoyed himself so thoroughly when he was kicked by a horse and knocked unconscious for three months, a few years ago, that he has bought three mules. Gluyas Williams sharpens 200 lead pencils a day. Just a week or so ago I heard Ted Cook wishing he had dandruff to relieve the ennui of his working hours. It must be fun to have palsy; something going on all the time.

\* \*



i visit tia juana, mexico

(November, 1927.) Dear Diary:

I have seen more bad-fitting toupees in the last week than in all the rest of my life. Business called me for two days to the quaint little village of Tia Juana, Mexico. As chairman of the board of the Life Curtailment Institute I had certain chemical investigations to make over there, and, in addition, I desired to make a number of minor personal investments in certain Mexican enterprises. While on Mexican soil, I could not help observing the great number of bad-fitting toupees—and that's not all!

I could not help observing that Tia Juana is what



## I VISIT TIA JUANA, MEXICO

you would call wet and wide open. It gradually dawned on me as I strolled down the streets in search of some picture post cards that every store I entered was a combination saloon, dance hall, and gambling joint. I mean you walk out of one saloon and you don't have to walk three or four blocks to find another as we did when I went to college, but you just turn into the next store without looking and there you are in another saloon. It is like magic. Or rather, it is very confusing, when what you really want is a grocery store where they sell picture post cards.

This is where I saw the bad-fitting toupees.

It dawned on me as evening fell that I was in virtual and unwilling attendance at a convention of all the ex-bartenders of the United States, barring those who are not still attending bar in the United States or carrying liquor routes in our best neighborhoods. And I slowly sensed, as the day passed, that the gentlemen—also with bad-fitting toupees—standing alongside all those revolving colored wheels and Victrolas with pictures in the front of them were gamblers.

And that afternoon I was taken by some friends to a place where horses ran around and I saw more bad-fitting toupees, and I came to the conclusion Tia Juana is a broadminded town, and I wondered if it always holds true that broad-minded people wear bad-fitting toupees.

Tia Juana is the product of American prohibition. Before Volstead, it was a drowsy little Mexican village of a few people, horses, and horseflies—"Tia Juana" being Mexican for "Aunt Jane." It is one mile over

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

the border, sixteen miles south of San Diego, 150 miles south of Los Angeles, and small beers are a quarter. With the passage of the Difficult and Dangerous Drinking Act by our Congress, Tia Juana sprang overnight into what it was hoped was the toughest town in the world. If I get around to it, I will show it to be the tamest. It has one barroom a whole block long, with forty-eight cuspidors. On dull days the bartenders wear roller skates. Between Tia Juana improper and the United States border is the Tia Juana race track. The first horse I bet on came in five minutes late without any jockey, so you will pardon any little vitriol in my fountain pen this morning.

You can get anything you want in Tia Juana—wine, women, woulette and wace horses—but you don't want them. There is the paradox of Tia Juana. It is an ideal site for a theological seminary or an agricultural school. Never have I seen so many bad-fitting toupees. Never have I seen virtue so rampant. Tia Juana, the tame! Anything you can have you don't want. Let us thank our lucky stars for the romance of prohibition. Or, providing we are prohibitionists, let us reestablish the corner bar and restore drinking as a secondary sport and make it an avocation instead of the vocation of the American public.

Tia Juana offers a vast and intricate machinery for having a rotten time.

There is nothing so sad as a jazz band going full tilt at ten o'clock in the morning, with shirt-sleeved musicians wearing conical hats and trying to pump up an atmosphere of sin, in broad daylight. The border

## I VISIT TIA JUANA, MEXICO

closes at 6 P. M. and the crowd vanishes at 5.56, so the iniquity has to get going early in the day. To illustrate how much art for art's sake there is in Tia Juana, I will cite the orchestra leader I saw standing and playing his violin and getting his shoes shined over the edge of the platform.



I do not mean that Tia Juana is a phenomenon that should not be seen. It should be visited as a volcano is visited. It likewise is a boil, an eruption on the surface of American prohibition.

It has its picturesque phases. Jack Dempsey rolls in and buys himself a beer and takes a few cracks at a slot machine. Strangers come up and introduce themselves, and Jack bows modestly and smiles sweetly and turns



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

back to his slot machine. He probably dreads shaking hands worse than fighting.

A baby sits precariously on the edge of a bar while its parents have two beers.

Men and women line up at the bar and play the slot machines side by side. A man steps up to the bar and orders a whiskey; his wife arrives and stops the bartender. "No whiskey. Two beers, please." Even when one's wife is along, it is necessary to brush away the dancing girls. My companion's favorite line for disposing of Tia Juana's tinted temptresses was: "No, we have our children along today."

There are literally thousands of the slot machines. They take in money by the bushel and pay it out by the pint. Some of them probably pay nothing at all. I cannot imagine the Mexican government being so motherly as to check up on the mechanical perfection of all of these devices. I heard one man say that the machines would be just as well patronized if none of them paid a cent.

At the race track the gambling is under government supervision. In fact, the government takes the bets and retains ten per cent. The odds are not made until all bets are in, and are mathematically determined. It is probably as good betting as there is to be found at a race track. Under the grandstand is a long bar, one end of which is roped off for ladies. There are more games of so-called chance and more slot machines. My friend, after pouring a small fortune into these contraptions, said he thought he had better buy one of the ma-

## I VISIT TIA JUANA, MEXICO

chines and take it home and stand it up alongside the radio set and phonograph and take the profits himself.

I had almost forgotten all about wickedness. When I learned that I had some important matters to attend to down in Tia Juana and would have to go there much against my will, I thought of the fun I would have. I approached the adventure with college boy eagerness. A little sin, by jiminy!

Well, they can have their sin!

In comparison with my tired, tame, humdrum middle-aged family life, wild and wicked Tia Juana looks tireder, tamer, and humdrumer. The trouble with sin is, it draws entirely too many people with bad-fitting toupees.

After a couple of days abroad, it certainly does seem good to get back to the old U. S. A., and I think your women are the most beautiful in the world and that your skyline is simply wonderful.

\* \* \*



i take my fourth trip to san francisco

As a civic booster, a San Francisco fan is a case of smallpox compared to a Los Angeles fan. Talk to a man from southern California about southern California and you may think you have encountered the lowest form of animal life, but the fact is, you haven't heard *anything*; just wait until you get a man from San Francisco started. He's even worse than a New Yorker talking about New York.

Now, in New York, I know a great many people from San Francisco, and, unless you get them started on San Francisco, they are all apparently fine, normal, likable people. Among them are Will Irwin, F. G. Cooper, Charles G. Norris, Rube Goldberg, Rea Irwin, Gelett Burgess, and Herb Roth. Talk to them on any other subject than San Francisco and they seem entirely rational; mention San Francisco, and their eyes start to converge and they start to catch at their



## I TAKE MY FOURTH TRIP TO SAN FRANCISCO

thumbs. To the northern Californian, southern California is "on the other side of the railroad tracks."

Will Irwin's wife, Inez Haynes Irwin, writing in a small book sponsored by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, says: "If you ever start for California with the intention of seeing anything of the state, do that before you enter San Francisco. If you must land in San Francisco first, jump into a taxi, pull down the curtain, drive through the city, breaking every speed law, to Third and Townsend, sit in the station until a train—some train, *any* train—pulls out, and go with it. If in crossing Market street you raise that curtain so much as an inch, believe me, stranger, it's all off; you're lost. You'll never leave San Francisco." The Irwin family is strong for San Francisco (but lives in New York City).

I tried the taxicab experiment—pulled down the curtain, let it slip up a couple of inches as we crossed Market street, and peeked out, and I was not sure whether we were in Toledo, Cincinnati, Kansas City, or Siberia. It looked exactly like a two-inch peek at any other main street in any other American city, but, although it was mid-July, it felt like Siberia. So I said to the taxi driver. "Are we breaking every speed law?" He replied that we were. "Then, break on," I replied.

I have attempted four times to fathom the much-ballyhooed "It" of San Francisco, and I have come away, each time, feeling that San Francisco would be the most wretched, most miserable city in the world in which to live. It has no "It" for me. Each time, it has thrown a soggy fog in my face and cut me to the bone

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

with an icy wind ; this in each of the four so-called seasons of the year. When you go to San Francisco, take your woolen underwear and your coonskin coat, be it July or January.

I realize that, like her boosters, I do San Francisco much injustice. She is neither as great as they paint her nor as dreary as I picture her. The truth is, it is a marvelous city—a great place to visit, but no place to live. I know of none more picturesque. It is stuck on the huge hills of a boot-like peninsula, with the Golden Gate, four miles long and about two miles wide, at its tip, and with a land-locked harbor large enough for all the ships in the world, at its east. It is hills and historical aura that make San Francisco interesting. It is absurd little cable cars and taxicabs shooting up streets almost vertical in incline, and fine hotels and apartment houses perched on their peaks, perilous in the unmentionable but ever-felt possibility of another earthquake. San Francisco has a swaggering past, and there is swagger in its present-day audacity, and here, perhaps, is, in a nutshell, the secret of its fascination for some people. They have their guts to build thirty-two-story buildings in that burg. It once had and still has its gamblers, and that's what I like about it. But that does not make it a place in which to settle down to live.

They almost did not discover San Francisco, in the first place. On account of the fog, Sir Francis Drake, in the "Golden Hind," sailed right past it in 1579, missed it in the mists, and lost for the British the greatest of all harbors, one of the richest prizes in all the

## I TAKE MY FOURTH TRIP TO SAN FRANCISCO

world. It was two centuries later that white men first found it. After a year or so in California, there is one boy in history here for whom you get a real admiration, and that is Junipero Serra (pronounced Yu-ne-pay-ro) who was to the string of missions up and down the California coast what George Whelan was to the United Cigar Stores. He was the daddy of the missions, scattered a day's horseback ride apart, from San Diego to San Francisco. And it was he who was responsible for the discovery of San Francisco.

Monterey Bay, about a hundred miles south, had been discovered by boat in 1602, and in 1769, Father Junipero sent a party overland to try to find Monterey Bay *from behind*. This party walked right past Monterey Bay and found the peninsula and bay of San Francisco—for the Spaniards. Mexico with California became independent of Spain in 1822. President Jackson offered to buy northern California in 1835. And during our war with Mexico Frémont captured San Francisco for us in 1846, then a town of 800.

Three years later gold was discovered. The next year, counting miners and camp-followers, the population was 20,000. And, as the story goes, the next year, the first native sons were born. The town burned down three times during the first two years. Business with the world was mostly by boat for twenty years, for the first railroad was not completed until 1869. San Francisco started rich and rowdy, and it still keeps, or attempts to keep, its rich and rowdy manner. San Francisco people are said to meet life halfway instead of running from it, and they say you can do things in San



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Francisco that you can do nowhere else in America. I don't know what. I ate grapefruit for breakfast, shivered all day, and went to bed dead tired at night. Mrs. Herold and I held hands on a sightseeing bus all afternoon, but, shucks, you can do that in Kokomo or Chattanooga.



Nineteen years ago I saw San Francisco's Barbary Coast all ablaze, thick with Chinese, and sailors, and women of the oldest profession by the thousands, and it was perhaps the wildest and widest-open district (closed in 1917) in any American city, but that was nothing about which to brag. These are not civic advantages which cause you to choose a town as a place in which to raise your family. San Francisco talks a great deal about being devilish and free. The boys I mentioned in an early paragraph of this article and the

## I TAKE MY FOURTH TRIP TO SAN FRANCISCO

spielers on the sight-seeing buses all intimate that Frisco is a hell of a place, but the biggest thrill I got there was discovering that the hotel had steam heat in the radiator in the middle of July.

They make the earthquake of 1906 conspicuous by avoiding mention of it. I think they would do better to talk about it brazenly and call attention to the fact that the normal useful life of a skyscraper in any city is about twenty years, and call attention to the benefits of a good shake-up for any town about every twenty years. San Francisco is two years behind at this moment on what might be considered a really aggressive earthquake routine. They talk about their health-giving fogs; why don't they brag of their invigorating earthquakes; Lord knows I would prefer a few earthquakes to their continuous fogs. Their delicacy on the subject of earthquakes is one of San Francisco's blatancies.

San Francisco's Chinatown is like Bloomfield, in that there are about 2500 telephone subscribers and the operators know names instead of numbers. There are from 10,000 to 25,000 Chinese in this section, depending on the guide you have for the evening. It is an impressive Chinatown, however, and an excellent place to buy Chinese gifts manufactured in Newark, N. J. Many of the Chinese seem genuine and not put there by the Gray Tours. In the joss houses one gets a good superficial idea of Chinese religion. Funeral parties scatter bits of tissue paper, in each of which six small holes are punched, the theory being that evil spirits have to go through each hole in pursuit of the spirit of the departed; this should be a good market for old

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

player piano rolls. Man has imagined himself a lot of troubles, in addition to those which are real; we seem to like 'em.

San Francisco has the usual number of atrocious statues. There should be a statute against statues. The city hall is the finest building in the United States (according to the guide). It got a medal (according to the guide—he did not say what medal). Flower stands color the street corners. Chinese drugstore windows display rattlesnakes in alcohol. The Chinese pay their doctors to keep them well. Few of the rich men's mansions on Nob (Nabob) Hill were rebuilt after the "fire." Most rich men are glad to get rid of their big houses. Apartment houses and hotels now occupy the sites. Some of the old foundations are still there, as left by the earthquake. Why shouldn't sight-seeing companies employ intelligent, educated, and studious men for guides, instead of wisecrackers? Who first started that smart-aleck intonation used by most of these guides? The professional manners of any profession are apt to be all wrong. The best doctors now talk naturally instead of with an air of mystery.

\* \* \*





*"A way to make a lot of money off of tourists at the bottom of the mule trail."*

i visit the grand canyon of arizona

The Grand Canyon was built by the Eastman Kodak Company and God, for the financial benefit of the former and the glory of the latter. In both respects it is a success.

I have been within sixty miles of the Grand Canyon on the Sante Fe eight times, but have never taken time to stop. Just a big hole in the ground—that was the

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

way I figured it, anyway. And we had one of those in Bloomfield, south of the courthouse on the way to the depot. The best people in town called it the "Hollow," but most people in town spoke of it as the "Holler." Everybody in town used to dump old tin cans, worn-out wash boilers, stovepipes, and other trash into the Hollow. I suppose that, in time, the Hollow will be filled up.

But here, a few weeks ago, I was racking my brains for some place to go, and the Grand Canyon popped into my mind. (Cries of "Plenty of room for that!") Mrs. Herold had been urging me to take a trip. Frequently she would answer some civil remark of mine with the injunction: "Aw, go take a trip."

"It's nice up there now," said the porter on the Pullman.

I had been thinking of going down to something instead of up to something, so I puzzled over the porter's remark a moment and studied the folder and found that the south rim of the Canyon has an altitude of 7,000 feet.

"The railroad goes right up to the edge of the Canyon, doesn't it?" I inquired.

"Yes."

"Well, I hope they have a good backstop at the end of the line."

"We've never lost a train yet," he reassured me.

It wasn't, at first glance, quite the knockout I expected. I wasn't disappointed, but I wasn't paralyzed. The scale was not quite up to my expectations. I learned later that this was partly because you can't

## I VISIT THE GRAND CANYON OF ARIZONA

comprehend the scale with ordinary eyes. The opposite brink seemed a couple of miles away, but it is, in reality, thirteen. The bottom seemed, well, down there a piece, but I learned the next day that what I thought was the bottom was just about halfway down. I went down on a mule, and it was no stone's throw. By mule, it is seven or eight miles. And something like forty, coming back on the same mule on the same trail.

Within a couple of hours after my arrival at the Canyon I learned that you must let the Canyon grow on you. The Canyon is over two hundred miles long and an average of ten miles wide, but it is not the immensity of the Canyon which is important. Its nuances are the thing. I stayed five days and would like to have stayed two weeks. I don't want to seem soft or sissy and I don't want to be misunderstood, but I can imagine no better way to spend a whole day than to sit in one spot on the rim and let the Canyon talk to me all day. And I am not the type who communes with Nature. My idea of a place to live is in the Times Building at Forty-second street and Broadway. The point is, the Canyon is something going on every minute. The sun plays tunes on the jags and crags, shadows are in constant shift, and the recital never ceases except, perhaps, for a short time near noon when the direct sun finds no juts and leaves the whole picture a washed-out gray.

But to appreciate the Grand Canyon, one must take to the trails. Measured in mule steps, it becomes the one wonder of the world. Down, down, down you go,



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

and you think on arriving at the Indian Gardens on the Bright Angel Trail that you are surely at the bottom, but you have merely started. The final miles into Granite Gorge, where flows the muddy Colorado, are the most thrilling of all, and from the rim you have not



even guessed their existence. Especially hair-raising, if you are out to have your hair raised, is the descent down the Devil's Corkscrew. Here is a terrifying six-hundred-foot drop down a mad zigzag, so steep that the mules must go it alone, and the passengers must take

## I VISIT THE GRAND CANYON OF ARIZONA

it afoot. But, even at that, you do not feel heroic, for, as John McCutcheon once said, the presence of some peaceful old lady in the party takes all conceit out of you. It is the visual thrills which stir the blood—gorgeous flux of color, ebb and flow of light and shadow. I would like to wallow in the paint of Grand Canyon for a fortnight.

And yet I do not know that the Grand Canyon is beautiful. I sometimes wonder if there is any such thing as beauty in Nature. Or is beauty possible only in man-made things—is beauty, after all, mathematical? Two and two make four—perhaps that is beauty. Half the things we exclaim over as beautiful are merely awe-inspiring, which is something else again. It may be that the Grand Canyon is merely interesting and entertaining, as would be, perhaps, a glimpse into some gigantic open abdomen—red blood there instead of red sandstone. If red is beautiful as red, and blue as blue, there is, then, resplendent beauty in the Grand Canyon; but there is also tremendous chaos and disorder which may be the surest sort of ugliness. To me it is a soothing chaos and disorder, a relief from the mathematics of civilization, but I would think twice before I would gasp "Beautiful!" I don't mind gasping, but I hope I gasp a little more accurately than some of the lady tourists that I heard on the Canyon brink.

How did it happen?

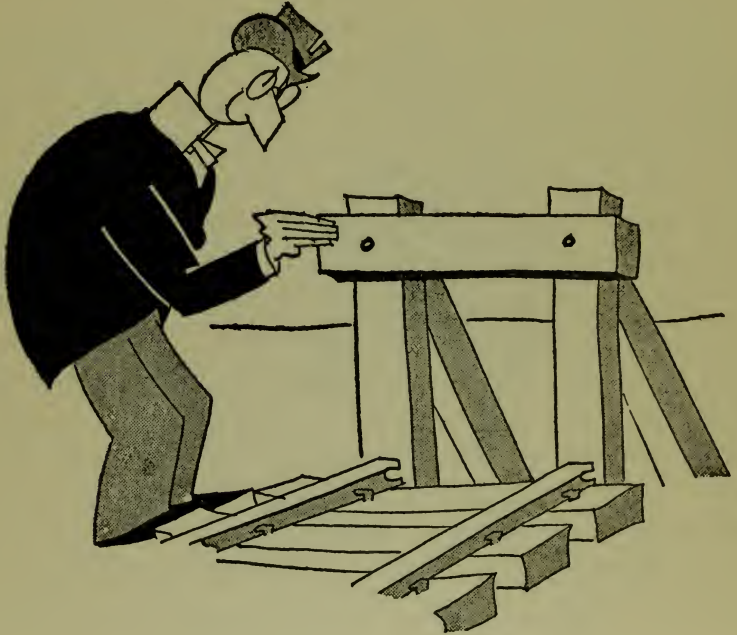
What dug this ditch, five or six thousand feet deep and as wide and long as hereinbefore mentioned?

"It is the result of a process," say the publishers of one of the booklets sold at the hotel newsstand," which

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

may be observed in the most ordinary gully beside a country road."

Another writer says: "When the summer sun comes, snow melts and tumbles down the mountain sides in millions of cascades. Ten million cascade brooks unite to form ten thousand torrent creeks; ten thousand tor-



rent creeks unite to form a hundred rivers beset with cataracts; a hundred roaring rivers unite to form the Colorado, which rolls, a mad, turbid stream, into the Gulf of California.

"Every river has cut another canyon; every lateral creek has cut a canyon; every brook runs into a canyon; every rill born of a shower, and born again of a shower,



## I VISIT THE GRAND CANYON OF ARIZONA

and living only during these showers, has cut itself a canyon; so that the whole upper portion of the basin of the Colorado is traversed by a labyrinth of these deep gorges."

The parent of the above two paragraphs is Major John Wesley Powell, the first man to travel the Colorado River through the Canyon. He did it in 1869, and few have done it since. You do not know the Grand Canyon unless you know John Wesley Powell, and you will miss one of the most thrilling pieces of real literature in American letters unless you read his diary of his trip through the Canyon, on which he lost four of the nine men who started with him and two of his four boats.

The twelve people in our mule party were about as good as any twelve people ever gathered together anywhere, and I couldn't help thinking what an unnecessary fuss we make about the formation of our social groups in this world. We may work a lifetime to build up the right kind of crowd in Detroit or Los Angeles, but here, on a few minutes' notice, and without much thought by anybody, was assembled a social group about as good as they come.

The El Tovar Hotel, otherwise excellently run, should be awarded the Pulitzer prize for short bed-clothes.

\* \*



*"There is somebody at the door to buy the car. What if he actually buys it?"*

*"Don't worry; he won't. And if he does you can buy another one just as bad."*

#### second-hand car not for sale

(April 1928.) Darling Diary: The sum total of human happiness could be increased manyfold if everybody would keep an old car on hand to sell, and advertise it continuously. We recently decided it would be wise to put the Hesperus on the market, and I cannot recall a merrier two weeks in all my life. Little does it matter that we have not yet sold the Hesperus; our conclusion is that it is more pleasure to try to sell the car than it would be really to sell it.

I inserted classified ads in two of the daily newspaper-

## SECOND-HAND CAR NOT FOR SALE

ers and sat down all a-quiver to await the rush of buyers.

Never has my life been so full and rich.

Advertising the *Hesperus* has practically made me socially. I have not had a dull moment since the first ad appeared.

All kinds of interesting, quaint and charming people have come to my door. I don't think a single one of them has had any intention whatever of buying a second-hand car—they have all just come up to see me socially, and to talk about motor cars in general, and to tell me particularly about all the cars they have owned, and to take a ride in the *Hesperus* and to ask me if I were really serious about the price I mentioned in my ad. It has been two weeks of solid entertainment, and I have made many fine new friends. Never again will I be without a second-hand car to sell and a classified advertisement in the newspapers. Our doorbell was ringing all day, and no sooner would I return with one guest from a ride around the block than there would be another delightful companion awaiting me for another little demonstration trip.

I learned early that they had no designs on my car. It was purely a matter of pleasure for all concerned.

And the strange thing is that after the first two or three attempts at selling the old misfortune I lost all desire to give it up. I seemed to convince myself, if no one else, that it was a marvelous car, high-powered, easy riding, economical, and blessed with virtues that I had never before suspected. I came to be a little nervous at the start of each demonstration that perhaps I



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

might have the bad luck to make a sale this time, but I ceased to worry even about that. I shall never sell the Hesperus, thank God! I shall keep it on the market year in and year out, and have another car for actual use—I shall use the Hesperus solely as a selling car.

My resolution to this effect is based partly on my realization that the Hesperus can be made a source of perennial pleasure for all mankind. All of my prospects seemed to get thorough pleasure out of thinking of buying it. All of them seemed to glow for a while with a sense of imminent ownership, just as, at first, I glowed with a sense of imminent riddance. I discovered a new class of people—individuals who like to play with the idea of buying a motor car. They are no good at all as buyers, but they are wonderful company. They have plenty of time, and tongues as ready as their purses are reticent. A jolly lot, the folks who didn't buy the Hesperus!

Especially tenacious in my memory is one of my dud customers. He was a genial old fellow about sixty-five, and he rode up in an old Ford for which (he told me later) he had been offered \$25. He was accompanied by two sons about eleven and twelve, one of whom was driving a Ford, and both of whom he addressed as "Honey" and "Sweetheart." The old fellow wore puttees and crutches—a new use for puttees, I believe—and once, when he stooped over, a teaspoon fell out of his vest, which was sufficient to set him off on a fifteen-minute recital about his ulcers of the stomach. He seemed a husky sort, however, and I will probably beat him to the tomb by about twenty years. He had some

## SECOND-HAND CAR NOT FOR SALE

wild story about the tires on his Ford. As near as I could gather they had been driven something like ninety thousand miles. He asked me my best price and I told him, and he replied that he "could buy second-hand cars mighty hard in this market," and began to tell me about all the \$25 cars he had owned. I think he mentioned one car that he had seen given away for nothing in a garage a day or so previous. I almost tucked the Hesperus under his arm, or under his crutch, and then I recalled that once I sold her I would again be without contact with my fellow men, and I stuck to my price. I need that car as a social wedge.

What was it Emerson said?—if a man has the worst second-hand car under the sun to sell, the world will beat a pathway to his garage doorway. Well, I used to be a recluse and an unknown, but now I am a celebrity and the life of the town.

Come up and buy my car some time, all of you.

\* \*



*"Between those new goldfish and my new mustache it has been a very full and eventful fortnight, hasn't it, dear?"*

### goldfish for zest

I find it pays to keep something going on. Life is exciting only if we make it exciting. Yes, life is what we make it. I don't know whether I am more interested now in our new goldfish or in my new mustache. (As I write this, the latter is about the size of a goldfish, and both are uppermost in my life at this moment—next to the children, of course—so it is natural that I should write about both at this time.)

Hildegarde is to blame for the goldfish. She had some small slices of orange peel in a crock in the back-yard and was talking about them as her goldfish, and I



## GOLDFISH FOR ZEST

looked in on the scene and said immediately to her mother: "Dod gast it, blither my splinters (trying to talk like a seafaring man, to go with the subject of goldfish), dod gast it, that child ought to have some real goldfish, and I'm a-goin' to git her some!" So we jumped in the car and rushed down to the goldfish section at Nash's Department Store and asked to see some of their goldfish suitable for a little girl.

"Is that the little girl?" said the clerk, stepping from behind the counter and looking at Hildegarde appraisingly.

"Yes."

"Um, well, now, let me see," he said, with that tone of voice which professional men use when they wish to indicate profound cerebration. "Um, um. Well I think I have some that would be just exactly the right thing for her. Let's see, now, she has blue eyes, hasn't she? And is she of a nervous or phlegmatic temperament?"

"She is a bit phlegmatic, but her sister, Doris, is quite nervous, and she will also, of course, be in the same house with these goldfish, if that makes any difference."

"Well, no, I don't think so. About how many do you think you would want?"

"I thought we might start off with two and build up," I replied. "Do goldfish have babies?"

"Yes and no. I wouldn't want to promise. I don't think you had better count on little ones, though, of course, if they do come I know you will welcome them with open hearts. But, no, I wouldn't take that into

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consideration at this juncture. You had just better buy as many as you think you will want."

"We will take two, and if they seem to fit into our home life and if we have good luck with them we can add to the collection from time to time, as whim and fancy dictate and as our purse allows."

"What about those two little fellows there?" said the clerk, pointing out two agile little creatures near the bottom of the tank. "Those are 35 cents each, or three for a dollar. Of course, you can save by buying three."

"We might save a little now, but how about the years of upkeep and service that we would have to give the extra little fellow? No, I think it would be more pleasure to see just the two of them swimming about. It would suggest that real companionship which so many of us miss in this world. You know the old saying—'Two is company and three are a crowd.'"

"In all of the years I have been working with goldfish I never thought of that," said the goldfish expert. "I think we will have to set a new price on these fish, just as the result of your suggestion—35 cents each, or two for a dollar. Of course, we won't put that into effect until about April 15," he added, "so that it will not affect this deal. So you think those two will about fill your requirements?" I nodded, and he fished them out with a little net and put them into an oyster bucket.

"What about feeding them?" I asked.

"You will need a box of this," he said. "Give them about as much of this every two days as they will eat in fifteen minutes." That is how it sounded to me. Mrs.

## GOLDFISH FOR ZEST

Herold thinks he said to give them about as much every fifteen minutes as they will eat in two days.

"Have you a bowl, and what about a castle and some seaweed and some statues of little naked ladies?" he inquired.

Well, it turned out that the cost of the goldfish themselves was just a drop in the bucket.

"Is there anything else we should know?" I asked. "How often do we have to wash them, and is it necessary to wash behind their ears, and are they subject to adenoids, pneumonia and similar upsets?"

"When any of those questions come up," he replied, "just use your common sense. Put yourself in the place of a goldfish and ask yourself what you would want under similar circumstances."

So we have just fought it out along those lines and tried to use our heads, and I hardly need to say that those goldfish have given us many a happy hour. Several times we have wished that we had taken the young man's night telephone number, but we have learned to depend on our own judgment in minor and major crises and everything has gone all right—except for the harrowing thought that I had just a week ago Wednesday.

"Great heavens!" I exclaimed at that time in a voice so pregnant with terror that Mrs. Herold almost looked up from her hemstitching. "We can't ever move. We have got to live in California the rest of our lives with these goldfish."

"Maybe there will be some way out."

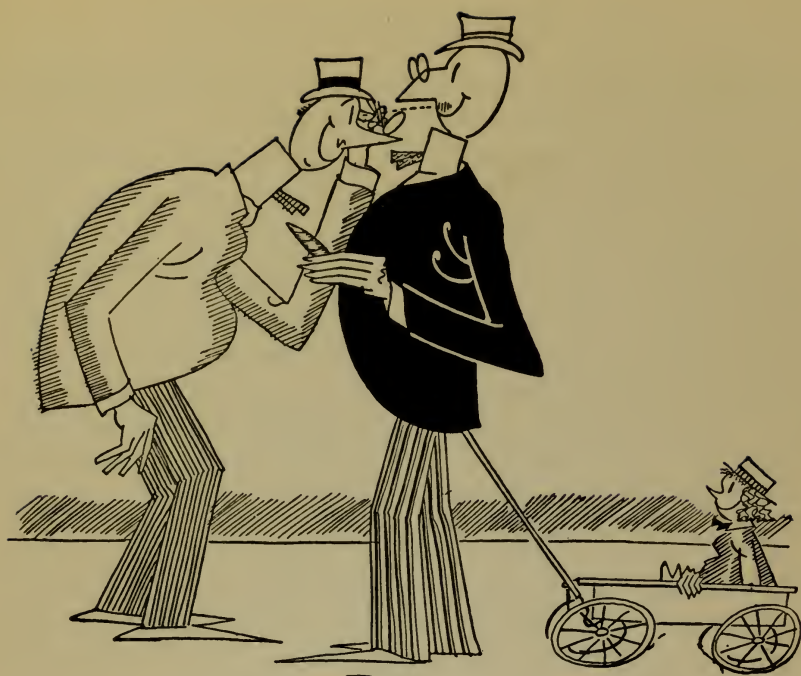
"Some way out! There's no market for second-hand



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

goldfish. What becomes of old goldfish? You never heard of a home for old goldfish, did you? No, sir, people get goldfish and they become attached to them, and they never move from that spot all the rest of their days. You can't travel with goldfish. Bird cages, yes, maybe, but never with a bowl of water. Imagine going all the way to Paris, or Vienna, or Nice or Naples with a bowl of water. My God, woman, we're trapped!"

So that is why I started to raise a mustache.



*"Congratulations!"*

*"Have a cigar on me, Joe."*

mustaching the months away

I know that it is unreasonable to expect that everything will be different after I get my new mustache perfected. Yet I believe there glows within me the dim, small hope that I shall then walk in a new world. I don't know just what it is I want different; I have been counting my blessings recently and they count up fairly well; yet I suppose it is true of human nature that no one ever becomes so healthy, wealthy and wise that he is unhaunted by unnamed yearnings—the more

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

unnamed the more yearning. I don't know what I want different, but I want it different.

It is amusing how we thus expect all our affairs to turn a new hue upon the acquisition of some new trifle. We buy a radio set, for example, with the idea that it will be just what we need to make life full and perfect. Perhaps it does actually help for a few evenings and then, likely as not, it becomes another nuisance on our list of nuisances.

It won't help me out a great deal if when my new mustache has reached full fruition people turn and look at me and remark: "Isn't he handsome!" For I know that handsome is as handsome does, and I don't do handsome. Even if I heard this on every hand it would lose its stimulation after the first three or four days. I have spent too many years of my life building up disdain for merely handsome persons. Nature forced me to this course, and I can't back-track now. No I don't want a mustache to add to my beauty.

To begin with, I can't decide what kind of mustache I want to raise or what effect I want to achieve. Do I want it to make me seem sinister, Machiavelian, Mephistophelian, or light, airy, lyrical, dashing or debonair? I got off on the wrong track at first. Early in its development I asked Charles Starr what the effect was and he said: "It makes you look like a chaser." I thought that over for a couple of days and finally shaved it in another fashion.

At any rate, it is something to do these long winter evenings. It is a wonderful adventure, this being turned, as it were, into a big department store and in-



## MUSTACHING THE MONTHS AWAY

vited to choose a new personality. It is about as near as we ever get in this world to starting life all over again. Women must get a similar thrill every once in a while when they change the style of their bob, or when they select a new fur coat, or even a new gown, but we men have to wear about the same clothes and haircuts year in and year out and, confidentially, some of us get pretty tired of it. I have seen the time when it would have taken little persuasion to have induced me to get tattooed all over.

There ought to be a literature or an advisory service for men in the throes of raising a new mustache. I need charts, diagrams or a gallery of wax figures, and I need friendly and grandfatherly counsel. I am suddenly conscious of all mustaches and it is amazing how many there are. I thought they were all gone. But you just try it yourself—that is, just go out and see how many men out of the first hundred you meet still wear mustaches. I peer intimately into every male face that I pass, studying mustache styles, and if you read of me getting a sock in the jaw one day soon you may know I have stared a little injudiciously into the upper lip of some over-sensitive roughneck. But where else am I to turn for inspiration and guidance except to the living specimen? I tell you, raising a mustache is a pioneering business. I would be willing to pay a fancy fee for a good look at a row of dummies with all the known and accepted mustache trims.

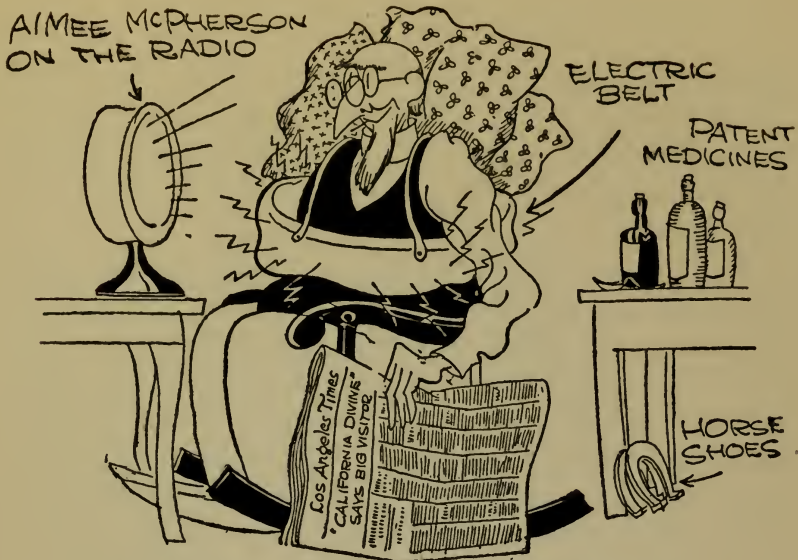
While there are perhaps as many mustaches to-day as there ever were, it is no doubt true that there is, in America at least, a grand total of much less mustache

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

than there used to be. The wideflung, flamboyant type is no more. There has been a righteous popular wave of distrust of the microbe-monastery or soup-sweeper species of mustache. The mattress mustache passed with the advent of Pasteur. To-day there is toleration only for the dot or wispy type, to which the vacuum cleaner may be easily applied, or which may be sent economically to the dry cleaner for Pasteurization.

I presume I have had mustache potentialities for many years, yet this is the first time I have ever been seized with the passion. I can't explain it. I suppose it is a budding of the mother instinct which lies latent in even the most masculine of us; we must raise something. Mayhap if I had a garden that would have sufficed, but I am a roamer and not for nigh on twenty years have I set hoe to earth. My two daughters are well on their way toward middle age, and I guess it was simply just about time for my entrepreneur instincts to assert themselves somehow.

This mustache, understand, is not for adornment. It is an activity, an interest in life, a game. If it ever becomes second nature with me I shall strike it off relentlessly. As soon as it ceases to entertain me it shall perish. I am not concerned with this mustache as a mustache, but as something going on in a sometimes otherwise dull world. I shall never wear it subconsciously. If it becomes unexciting I shall banish it or else grow a flowing biblical beard and dye it blue.



*A typical Los Angeles citizen having a big evening.*

### *i visit aimee mcpherson's temple*

Aimee Semple McPherson is a great artist. Whatever else she may be, she is one of the leading actresses of her time. If she had the intelligence to back up her personality, I believe she might easily, if she so desired, be the foremost woman of the stage in the world today. I went to her temple of "The Four-Square Gospel" to see her, as one goes to the Leaning Tower of Pisa, or to Vesuvius.

I do not hesitate to say that she "got me," that she gave me a thrill and a lift. She is a radiant, magnetic being, and I can easily understand why thousands of weak, sick, soul-hungry humans feel, when Aimee is near, that all is well. They built her a tremendous



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

temple; they come and shell out their dough; and they jump through hoops for her like a troupe of trained French poodles. Her service is the most perfect and pitiable picture of large-scale teamwork I have ever witnessed.

The crowds come early. By six-thirty, the temple is half full. At seven it is jammed. An organist plays until seven-thirty. Aimee enters from a high door and walks down a stairway. She gets long applause. And then she starts to talk about trouble as if old trouble were nothing, and she smiles to the high ceiling and beams, and intonates and soothes, and everything seems well. By gosh, it seemed well to me. I didn't have much the matter with me except a couple of blisters from horseback riding, but I forgot them. It was an artistic "lift" for me—the same sweet spinal chill I find in the presence of any good performer on canvas, on the stage, the golf course, or the piccolo. I am tired of the theatre, but I responded to the theatre of Aimee Semple McPherson. It is hard to describe Aimee and still give her credit. I feel that the stuff she does is coarse and crude, and it is a question in my mind whether she does great good or immeasurable damage, but I do say that she is an artist in her way of doing it.

The average Aimee auditor is about three years in mental age. Many of the assemblage, the evening I was there, were zero minus—in fact, there was trouble several times in quieting some of the more idiotic. Some of them tried to do their stuff ahead of time. But the aisles are well stocked with assistants capable of rubbing down the overexcitable customers.

## I VISIT AIMEE MCPHERSON'S TEMPLE

As soon as she hits the platform, Aimee starts right in to put your burdens on the run. There is not a lag in the McPherson exhibition all evening. "Good evening,



everybody. May the Lord bless you." And you feel a little bit blessed, even if you have been to college and have relished Tom Paine, and reasoned it all out to the

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

contrary—and, as I say, these people haven't, so they must feel awfully blessed. Then, after adjusting the radio microphone, and fooling a bit with her gorgeously marcelled hair, and perhaps making an announcement or two (the first, you will learn, of a hundred announcements), Aimee goes into a song. She starts the first line and the choir and audience take it up. Here Aimee's remarkable executive ability manifests itself. After the song is going, she may telephone somebody with the instrument which is always near her, or she may read notes from her assistants and dispatch messengers hither and thither. She is busy, nervous, dynamic, interesting every minute. I heard one gland specialist speak of her last winter as being a typical thyroid.

Aimee's genius is best displayed in the manner in which she plays tennis with her congregation. She works them right along with her constantly, has them doing something all the time—standing up, holding up hands, holding up Bibles, singing a verse, reading a paragraph, repeating a sentence after her. She coaches them, croons to them, cheers them, praises them. "Well, isn't that fine!" "My! I'm proud of you!" "Isn't that splendid!" If you were to tell Aimee that her following is of three-year-old-average intelligence she would probably be terribly insulted, but she has learned instinctively that it is, and she handles her meetings exactly like a children's party. She is a hundred times as smart as anybody in her congregation, but she does not suspect it. Her reaching down to them is totally instinctive; if it were the least bit patronizing they



## I VISIT AIMEE MCPHERSON'S TEMPLE

would sense it instantly and drop her like a hot coal. She is a strange mixture of extraordinary genius and aboriginal ignorance. She is utterly cool and composed in her routine, yet I feel that she is partly dumb and partly savage; I can't conceive of her reaching such artistic heights without sincerity. She is wise and she is barbarous. She throws up a passionate prayer, and, as she throws it up, she adjusts her hair, adjusts her microphone, and thinks up the first line of the song into which she is to throw the brothers and sisters at the end of the prayer. The song is going almost before the prayer is finished. Such speed simply has to be premeditated. She is a rapid salvationist; she gives them evangelism faster than they can resist it. It is all hectic for everybody but Aimee.

Among other things, Aimee is the best little intonator I have ever heard. Hardly a word passes her lips which is not intonated to splendor and grandeur. Even the numbers of the hymns have hidden glories. No. 213 is not No. 213. It is "Nummmmm-ber two hunnnnnnnndred AND thirrrrrr-teeeeeecen." Well, what are you going to do with a woman who can express the gamut of human emotions in reciting a hymn number, a woman who can warm the cockles of your heart by the way she says "No. 213"?

"Now EVERYBODY stand up and turn around and smile and shake hands with three other people and say, 'May the Lord bless you!'"

Mrs. Herold and I stood up and some nice old ladies behind us turned us around and shook hands with us.

"Are you first-nighters?"

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS'

"Yes, we are," I answered. It flashed through my mind that the old ladies would be shocked if they knew what a first-nighter I used to be along old Broadway.

"*There!* That's splendid!" Aimee was pulling us all together again.

"How many here tonight need healing?" About 100 in the audience stood up.

"How many here tonight have been healed by prayer?" About 300 stood up.

"There, look at that! Isn't that fine!"

It was Saturday night, which was healing night at the temple. Large sections of seats in the auditorium were roped off for those who were to be prayed for.

"Mr. John Larkin will now play a medley of hymns on a carpenter's saw," announced Aimee next. "This is a saw consecrated to the Lord."

She then said that the church hoped to start a Bible reading marathon, during which different members would read the Holy Bible through in relays, over the radio, from start to finish without stopping, and that it would probably take about four days, night and day.

Those who knew anybody who needed praying for would please hand in the names and these names would be prayed for in the Watch Tower, in which there is constant prayer, twenty-four hours of the day—women all day and men all night, in two-hour shifts.

"Take down your umbrella and get a blessing. Come on now."

Another short prayer, and then those who had been healed were asked to come up on the rostrum and testify. About twenty marched up. One woman had been

## I VISIT AIMEE MCPHERSON'S TEMPLE

dying of cancer, and she had thrown out her hand and it had landed on a verse in an open Bible and this verse had declared the Lord's power of healing, and she had arisen cured of her disease.

It was then a brother's turn. "I passed away on the night of June third, five years ago, and was dead for five hours." This man had risen from the dead and had taken up the ministry in gratitude for his miraculous "cure."

I do not question the authenticity of faith healing. Thousands of excellent persons believe in it thoroughly. Professor Richard C. Cabot, M. D., of Harvard Medical School, was quoted some time ago as saying: "I have not the slightest doubt that it does good, that it cures diseases, organic as well as functional." But I do feel that Aimee's cures were upon a quite ignorant and possibly superstitious class of people, and it seemed to me that most of the diseases of which her testifiers claimed to be cured sounded as if they had been acquired in the first place off of labels on patent medicine bottles. If Aimee has done nothing else, she has induced a great many people out here to give up vile and injurious patent medicines. Relief from patent medicines perhaps constitutes the cure in many of her cases. "Internal complications" is one of the favorite maladies.

When the hour for the evening's healing arrived, the temple became a madhouse. At least a hundred ailing crowded onto the rostrum and into the aisles leading thereto. Particularly interesting was one pair of parents with a little child with rickets. After the healing, they tried to make the child walk, but it did not.



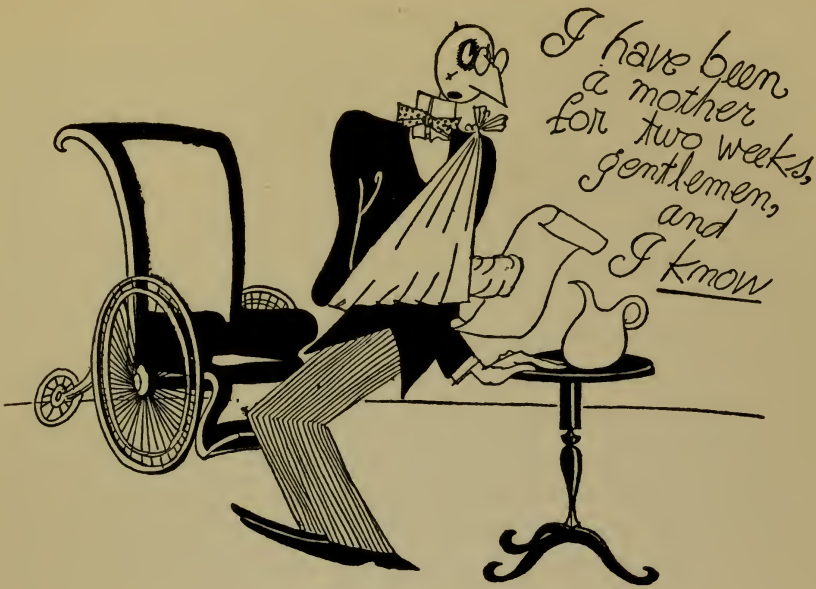
## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

One young woman presented herself who had had pyorrhea for five years. After the healing, she waved her arms wildly for some time and the attendants had a hard time to subdue her. On the whole, there was too much speed and confusion to tell whether or not there were any actual cures. Of one thing I am certain, Aimee does a wonderful job of making you want to be cured. I almost went up for baldness. And she has an elaborate technique of building up confidence. Personally, I could not get complete confidence, but a great many people did.

Los Angeles is perhaps the only city in the world in which Aimee McPherson could flourish so flourishingly and so continuously. This is the electric-belt belt. It is filled with folks who have suffered with something or other for sixty-five or seventy years, and who have devoted a lifetime to trying everything on drugstore shelves, and who have just about given up. Just the other day we were visited by a woman who knew a woman who had had her teeth filled by faith. I asked, "Gold or porcelain?" but got no answer.

Aimee has ankles that come down straight like a pair of pants, but she has consummate art and magnificent hair, and she does wondrous works. She gets hold of hundreds who have come out here to die, *and they don't*. It may be Aimee, or it may be the climate—don't ask me.

\* \* \*



children are strange bedfellows (a speech)

GENTLEMEN, I used to think fatherhood was the berries, but today I want to say a word in behalf of motherhood. Never again will I knock the grand old institution of motherhood, nor, for that matter, the grand old institution of grandmotherhood. Henceforth, I am a teetotal one-hundred-percenter on motherhood, and I don't mean maybe.

You may wonder why I have thus come over to the enemy. The answer is, gentlemen, because I have, for the past two weeks, been a mother.

All my life—up until two weeks ago—I have regarded motherhood as a bed of roses and beer and skittles, and fatherhood as a crown of thorns. But now I know better. All my life, I thought that I, the father

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

in our family, was the head of the family and the main-spring and the backbone of the family. But now I know better. Boys, I was—and am—just the waterboy.

Two weeks ago this morning, gentlemen, Mrs. Her-old boarded a train and left us, a jolly little family group, on the station platform. Tomorrow morning she returns, and she returns to a little family group that will be a whole lot jollier to see her come back than it was to see her go. I think we were perhaps just a little bit glad to have her depart when she departed; that is, secretly. "Well, for two weeks, *she* will not be here to cramp our styles," was perhaps a wicked little thought that dwelt unexpressed in the bosoms of my two daughters and myself. As she got on the train, she shouted out a few final instructions on the two most universally accepted methods of taking children's temperature, and a parting word of advice on the operation of hot-water bottles, and, as the train passed around the curve, she leaned dangerously over the observation platform rail and shouted something about albolene, and I really believe that we all felt, secretly, a low-down feeling of relief that she was gone for the moment. Of course, we all loved her. It was not that we did not love her. But she has for several years seemed rather superfluous. She did not, like I did, go out and get the jack; all she had to do was to spend it. She, from the children's standpoint, was a person who more often said "No" than "Yes." Well, we were free, now.

You have read, my friends, how a five-story building fell down, on a couple of workmen in the Eighth avenue subway in New York.



## CHILDREN ARE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Gentlemen, imagine that, and you will have some idea how it feels to become, suddenly, the mother of two little girls. I don't want any man ever again to take a rap at motherhood in my presence.

I used to think, gentlemen, that I could run this household and be its wife and mother, and do the marketing, and all that—with the little finger of my left hand; especially with Belle, our faithful maid, as my right-hand man.

I am standing up here this morning or tonight, or whatever it is, gentlemen, a broken and contrite masculine molecule. I have spent two weeks in a woman's shoes, and all I have to say is, my feet hurt. All I have to say is, thank God I am a father, gentlemen.

For two weeks I have had a thermometer and a sock and a nightie-bear and a tube of vaseline in one hand, and a pantie-waist and a Dr. Holt and a wad of cotton and a safety pin in the other. I have pulled teeth, administered enemas, baths, and spankings, unsnarled snarly hair, refereed fights, mended bicycles; I have cut hair, cleaned spectacles, hung up washrags, shoved spinach, wiped noses, played marbles, fought kids to bed and fought them out of bed, battered Doris to school in the morning, taken her to the orthodontist's to have her teeth twisted (orthodontist is from the old Greek words: *ortho* meaning *eight hundred* and *donti* meaning *dollars*). I have mixed cold compresses and wound up sprained ankles. I have cut hangnails, and laced shoes, and changed shoes from the wrong feet to the right feet, and wiped scratched places with mercurochrome. I have simon-legreed Doris into her bath

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

and out of it. I have sung and I have cursed. I have slept, popeyed, in the mother manner, sitting up in bed with a spoon in one hand and cough medicine in the other. I have worn 200 Firestone medicine droppers right down to the very tread.



I am bruised, torn, kicked, cut, tired, gaunt, and darkly circled under the eyes. And I thought motherhood was a sinecure. Thank God, Mrs. Herold is coming home tomorrow! She's coming home. *She's coming home tomorrow, gentlemen.*

I have a blue patch as big as a baseball glove on my right abdomen where Hildegard gave me a kick while I was trying to intimidate her into a pair of dry trousers, the third day out.

## CHILDREN ARE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

When Doris came down with bronchitis, Hildegard asked me to draw her a picture of a medicine bottle, and she discovered I could draw a good one, and I'll swear I have drawn 7,500 since then. And every one of them has had to have a cork in it, too.

By the hour, I have sat and struggled with her, endeavoring to induce drowsiness, by reciting: " 'Go to sleep, Georgie Porgie,' said the goldfish. 'Go to sleep yourself, little goldfish,' said Georgie Porgie. 'Go to sleep, Georgie Porgie,' said the goldfish. 'You go to sleep, little goldfish,' said Georgie Porgie. 'Go to sleep yourself, Georgie Porgie,' said the goldfish. 'Go to sleep, little goldfish,' said Georgie Porgie. 'Go to sleep, Georgie Porgie,' said the goldfish."

Have you ever tried this? It is a wonderful way to get a child to sleep. It works invariably, in four or five hours.

Have you ever seen the old Joe Jackson act in vaudeville—Joe Jackson with the bicycle which falls all to pieces—Joe who drops a pedal when he picks up a handlebar, and loses his hat when he reaches for a wheel? Gentlemen, as a mother, I am Joe Jackson. All my life, the last two weeks, has been a Joe Jackson act.

Let us never utter another sneer at motherhood. Look at mother. Who and what is she? Boys, I have concluded that mother must be not only a mother but a blacksmith, chiropractor, street cleaner, electrician, evangelist, hypnotist, clairvoyant, centipede, acrobat, tragedian, comedian, magician, antelope, cantaloupe, and a hydra-headed monster.



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

But she's coming home tomorrow, boys. *Mrs. Herold is coming home tomorrow!* She coming home tomorrow. Back to her Joe Jackson, and her little Joe Jacksons. Back to the fragments. Back to the torn tatters of the Jackson family. Is that our name? No, that doesn't sound just right. Where am I, boys? Once a mother, always a mother. Take me to the railroad station. (Soft voices saying: "Just humor him, fellows. We'll get him out here and put him in a nice, quiet sanitarium. Easy, now, boys. Easy now.")

\* \* \*

If I ever build a house for my own use, I am going to have hot and cold water faucets the size of fireplugs installed throughout the house. And bathtub drains the size of manholes. With gratings, of course, to retain the children.

\* \* \*

Spanish dancers dance as if they were inordinately proud of something they were going to do later, and they never do it.

\* \* \*

I have concluded that the tricycle recently acquired by my daughter Hildegard is nothing more nor less than a scheme to sell nuts and bolts. We get a loss of a gallon of nuts and bolts to the mile. I have it in my lap half the time, putting on new parts. Hildegard gets no farther than the first tree before it starts to lose hairpins and screws.

Sooner or later I am going to investigate the tricycle industry and see who is really behind it. The truth is

## CHILDREN ARE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

that when I paid down my forty-nine cents for that tricycle, I was a little suspicious. It seemed too cheap to be true. I knew there was a catch in it somewhere. Why, we can leave that tricycle in the corner overnight, and in the morning the floor will be all littered—it drips worse than a Christmas tree.

Our vacuum cleaner has indigestion once a week when it gets an overdose of tricycle accessories.

\* \* \*

Scientists say that deafness is increasing. Well, there is less to hear. And more to see.

\* \* \*

For one thing, there is nothing to rustle, anymore.

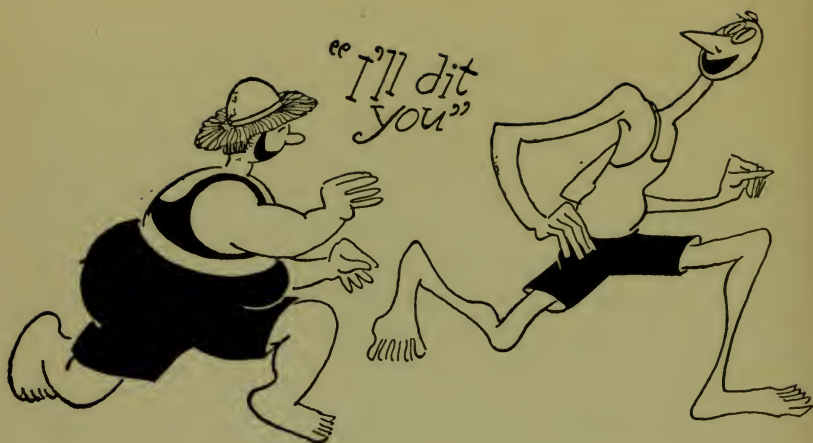
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I recently discovered that a collar button behind is superfluous, and that I have been wearing one there for thirty years purely out of fear and superstition and incorrect upbringing.

\* \* \*

Married men live longer than single men. Or at least they complain more about it.

\* \* \*



### beaches make strange bedfellows

I avoided oceans with great success until the children came. Yes, it was Doris who brought the ocean home to me. As a bachelor and as a young married man, I could take the ocean or leave it alone. And, boy, how I left it alone! But then came little Doris, damn it all, and we had to begin taking her to the beach. And every summer since then, it has been nothing but beach, beach, beach. I remember how, back in Indiana, I used to dread the coming of those bitter New England winters, but that was nothing as to how I now, wherever I may be, dread the coming of these mild Mediterranean summers. If we Herolds ever bust up, it will be in the summer time, and the ocean will be at the bottom of it. Mrs. Herold doesn't know how close she came to a separation, or (for all I care) a divorce, in the summers of 1927 and 1925. And I won't be sure of the present summer for a few weeks yet. I won't make any promises until the last hot dog has barked and the last



## BEACHES MAKE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

grain of sand has disappeared from the mohair of the upholstering of the car and of the living room davenport. In fact, my *mal de mer* usually hangs on until almost Christmas. And then it's Christmas. If it's not one thing it's another.

The best piece of news I read this summer was that report of the discovery that about half of New York City's life guards (who get their jobs by political appointment) can't swim a stroke. That is not corrup-



tion or carelessness. It's what I would call civic circumspection. If there is anybody in the world who ought to drown, it's people who go to beaches.

I suppose the people I see at the beaches are the same people that I see at the opera and at Woolworth's, but I always feel that they are our Worst People. Of course, another way of looking at it is, that the people I see at the opera or at Woolworth's are our Worst People. I suppose, after all, we are all our Worst People. But I do know that if I happen to wake up in the

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

morning with a feeling that, by and large, folks (as Eddie Guest calls them) are not so bad, and if that happens to be one of Mrs. Herold's days for dragging me to the beach, I am by nightfall convinced that yes they are.

The ocean calls. And even I admit that the ocean, *per se*, is an impressive institution. Majestic stretch of azure, arched by the blue vault of heaven, fringed with curling white-caps, edged with surf rolling rhythmically on silver stretch of sand. Thousands of miles of water. The ocean beckons. And there comes down to its edge a man, eating a hot dog, lugging a radio set, a knotty-kneed, gnarly-toed, Adam's-appled specimen of the genus homely. And a million others of his kind.

It seems to me that the ocean ought to do better than that.

And Mamma and the Kiddies

They come with pop bottles, automobile tires, pails, shovels, ice cream cones, chicken legs, tables, umbrellas, kodaks, ukuleles, tabloids, bed-clothes, high-heeled slippers, coolie coats, sailor pants, towels, ear-stoppers—everything but, and including, the kitchen stove—loaded for a day of misery.

And they go home, hours later, blistered, raw, razzed, sick to their tummies, with cantaloupe-crate nail-holes in their feet and sand in their radio and sand in their kodak and sand in their umbilicus, thoroughly licked by a Day with Nature.

They come down for their health, though they already have more of it to start with than they know what

## BEACHES MAKE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

to do with. I always ask myself what that kind of people want to be healthy for, anyway. You couldn't kill 'em with an axe. They are twice as healthy as it is healthy to be, in the first place. And relaxation—I always say to Mrs. Herold, just before the real argument starts, that the beach is covered with people relaxing who have never done anything else. If they had any nerves to begin with, they certainly wouldn't be at the beach. I think I should feel better about beaches if their attendance were limited to persons about to die. Nobody but the dying ought to go in so strenuously for health.

Each season we hear some talk of shocking costumes of the beach, and the need for censorship. It seems to me that the more they remove the less shocking they become, and that if they wished to become positively boresome they would remove it all. One thing I have against beaches is that they are so potent for purity. There is no such thing as desire under a beach umbrella. Sand is death to sex appeal. Toes bared to blazing sunlight have never led man's thoughts astray. No, the censors, the sons-of-guns, need never worry about sin on the beaches as long as there is sun on the beaches.

They love as they loll, it is true, but I cannot believe there is much passion in these lazy embraces; these indicate, rather than any fiery attachment, a sort of zoölogical-garden monkey-house gregariousness. Never am I so downright darwinian as when looking at other people's love on the beaches.

Perhaps the most severe indictment of the beach is the playfulness it inspires in dreat big mens and



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

womens. There is pushing and shoving and chasing and squealing and spanking, and just a general puppy-dogginess that is too much fun for anything. Aunt Lou, who is 225 if she is a day, goes and gives Uncle Perk a kick on the swivel, and he gets up and runs her out into three inches of water where she surrenders, and as he starts to let up she sloughs him in the small of the back with a handful of mud and he then has to duck her in ten inches of water, and the rest of the relatives think it is a circus.

Well, I don't have to take my naps on the beach and get waked up by a bare foot in my face, but I think I do deserve a good cuss for the way they bring the havoc home. Sand, you know, is catching. I sit in an eighth of an inch of sand in my bathtub from July 1 to October 1, and somehow it gets into my grain. Even if I never go near the beach, it gets into my bedslippers, into my breakfast, into my ears, and into my safety razor, and into my trouser cuffs. There are bathing suits and caps on the piano, and slippers all over the house. In short, my summers are soggy, and sloppy, and sandy, and generally hellish, all on account of some ocean or other. Why can't people stay on dry land where they were born? You don't see fish out trying to be pedestrians, do you?

\* \* \*



bringing back the sleeping porch

It is practically impossible to resist the exploration and pioneering impulse these days. There is perhaps no man alive who has not been stirred to some yearning for adventure by the deeds of contemporary aviators, marathon flagpole sitters and other courageous spirits. Even I, old stick-in-the-mud that I am, have felt the call of romance, the urge to seek danger and possible death in strange deeds, and perhaps a little of the modern desire to show off, so I suppose that is how I got it into my head recently to try sleeping outdoors on our sleeping porch.

We have not heard much about sleeping-porch sleep-

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

ing in recent years. There was a time, ten or fifteen years ago, when the person who bragged about sleeping on a sleeping porch was almost as numerous and as obnoxious as the man who boasted of his cold showers. But now all of the sleeping porch heroes have sneaked back indoors, and few new homes are built with sleeping porches. Sleeping-porch sleeping is simply not being done much these nights. Even in California practically none of the new residences has sleeping porches, although all the California homes of a decade ago were merely adjuncts to sleeping porches. You see them all around even yet, homes which are 80 per cent sleeping porch and 20 per cent home. But after freezing to death on sleeping porches for a few winters Californians decided that it was not worth the brag. For a spell they had great pleasure in writing back East about sleeping outdoors all winter, but they now use their sleeping porches for trunk rooms and catchalls. A tour of all of California's sleeping porches at 2 o'clock any morning these days would reveal darned few Californians in bed there. Most Californians are in gas-heated bedrooms at that hour, with the windows all pulled down tight. In fact, that is where most of them are from 9 p. m. on. A California winter night is bitter agony to anybody who has known the comforts of winter climate in Milwaukee, New York or Labrador.

I knew all this, but it didn't keep me from wanting to go sleeping on a sleeping porch.

I took off from our southeast bedroom on the evening of January 4, 1930. My assistant has taken barometri-



## BRINGING BACK THE SLEEPING PORCH

cal and thermostatic readings and we had been advised by the weather bureau that conditions would be as favorable as we could expect until about July 4. Mrs. Herold had robbed the children of blankets and we had brought in the robes from the car. She had placed ten electric heating pads in strategic positions in my bed and drawn down the canvas storm curtains and leashed them to their moorings. Plumbers had installed gas heaters in the four corners of the porch. I wore, in addition to the conventional pajamas, three sweaters, golf knickers and golf stockings, ear muffs, football headgear, a derby, chauffeur's mittens and fur-lined bed slippers. My whole family was on hand to see me off and gentlemen of the press had been invited, but had not come. The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce had refused to send photographers, but, unfortunately, I have a natural talent for pen-and-inky sketching, so I was able to get authentic pictures of my departure. I stepped out of the house onto the sleeping porch at exactly 10.01 p. m. I ought to have had more sense.

\* \* \*

I had so wanted to be one of the country's great sleeping-porch sleepers. I had hoped to come back and tell others how easy it is. I had even dreamed of fostering a sleeping-porch renaissance. Theoretically sleeping outdoors ought to be a good thing.

I might have stayed all night if the weather had been with me. But after I had been out there about an hour the thermometer dropped as only the California ther-

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

momometer can drop. (It may not drop so far, but every degree of drop seems like about 10 degrees of normal dropping.) Then came one of the worst gales that the Pacific Coast States have ever known. Then rain and sleet, and snow and hail. I could not see fifty feet ahead of me, the storm was so blinding. There were icicles on the electric heating pads. My instruments started to fail me, and suddenly all went black. I was numb with cold from head to foot, although I was suffocated with blankets. I realized that the game was up.

At 11:03 I began to broadcast. I called out desperately to Mrs. Herold: "Oh, Mamma!"

"What is it, Don?"

"I'm coming back in."

And I dug out and did.

Other explorers may come back from false starts and say that as soon as possible they will try again. I don't say anything of the sort. I am through. As long as I remain in California I remain indoors at night. And I am going to keep the windows down and sealed with the very best grade of sealing wax. We came to California for comfort, and this is no time or place for me to start trying to be heroic. Heroism is a sort of specialized work, anyway. The heroes to their heroism, say I, and we pedestrians to our pedestrianism. I had hoped to bring back the sleeping porch, but I now say that the sleeping porch can stay where it is, for all I care—dead and gone—a vanity of a bygone day. I was born indoors, and I will die indoors.



*"Is this a business trip to New York?"*

*"Yes, I'm going to try to find out why musical comedy producers tell short chorus girls to smile and tall ones to sneer."*

new york, after a recess

New York once more roaring and crashing at my nerve ends. A beastly place, but one with all that fascination of pandemonium and confusion which the circus holds for most of us. And just about as much of a place to live as a circus would be.

I have tried hard to decide what it is that differentiates New York from our other cities, and I believe it is this: It is the one American metropolis in which there is more going on than the senses can grasp. It alone provides an incomprehensible, unconquerable



## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

whirlpool of human movement, traffic, noise, bewilderment, intoxication, in which there is never cessation or rest. It alone is total jargon. Not only a jargon of tongues, but a jargon of mechanical noises. After a recess from New York, in America's most American city, New York seems utterly European. I had been ten years in New York and when I first went to Los Angeles people seemed strange. "These are American immigrants," explained a friend. "You have been living ten years among European immigrants."

It was hard for me to leave New York, but now, distasteful as New York seems to me, I can better than ever understand its hold. It has a pitch all of its own, and once you have keyed yourself to it, it is hard to break out of it. Just, I imagine, as it would be to quit the habit of three cups of strong coffee for breakfast each morning if you once acquired it. I am glad I am free of the New York grip. It may be dangerous even to be retasting it in a small dose. I go out for a smell and a glimpse and an earful, and then I hurry back to my hotel room and pray God to keep me a non-New Yorker.

I don't care much where else I live, just so it's else.

I remember that the first time I went to a big city I tried not to act green, for I was afraid they might think I was from the country. Now, I hope I am.

When Mrs. Herold put me on the train on the Pacific Coast, she sighed a wish that she were going along. "Just 3,000 miles of cinders," I said. I thought at the moment that this was just a lot of consolation, but by the time I reached New York I realized that out of the

## NEW YORK AFTER A RECESS

mouths of babes comes great wisdom. In fact, by the time I got to Chicago I was so bored with travel that I did not care whether the blue loops of my suitcase lid stuck out or not. No wonder Will Rogers is willing to risk his life every day in an airplane in traveling on his lecture tours. They say he gets \$3,000 a night. If I had to travel on a train every day I would want \$3,000 a night.

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Somewhere in Pennsylvania a typical New Yorker brushed his teeth while I was in the washroom and got toothpaste all over my shoes. It began to seem like old New York again.

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My shoes were not in such wonderful condition, however, in the first place. I had just shaved. The Pullman company should provide elbow drip cups to preserve your shoe shine through your shave.

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I bought a theater ticket at a busy speculator's shop. There were five men behind the counter in this particular place, and I never heard so much crying and whining in all my life. There is a certain type of New Yorker who has decided to whine his way to the top—and he gets there. On East Side streets he learned that the kid who can out-whine the others has his way most of the time. And you meet his adult counterpart all over New York, whining with that East Side baseball whine, and making it work.

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

I hated to leave California's sun and deserts and mountains and horses and bridle trails, but I was glad to get away from its boosters and braggers, its patent medicine ads and patent medicine addicts, its chiropractors, faith healers and its ubiquitous hypochondriacs, from its virtue virtuosos, from Hollywood's loud shirts, wide pants, yellow shoes and its adulation of collar-model genius, from California's smug, complacent cotton-stockracy and from its state societies.

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I was born in Indiana and I believe I have an honest affection for Indiana and many of its people, but I believe, too, that I have a higher idea of human fellowship than that it should be based on mere geographical juxtaposition of origin. If we can't get any closer to each other than that, we are still as far apart as the planets. If you are in Los Angeles and are that hungry for companionship, why not get up a picnic of the first 500 names in the telephone book?

\* \* \*





### the art of bronchitis

I have been trying to do some theater-going in New York but have, in most cases, attended the audience instead of the show.

Most theater audiences these days sound more like a convention of barking seals than a dignified gathering of human beings. This thing of paying from \$3.30 to \$6.60 to get barked at all evening is not what it is hacked up to be. It is my theory that there are only six shows a year in New York which need to be seen, and I have come all the way from California to see my six, and all I hear is whoops. I might as well have gone to a kennel in Los Angeles and sat for three hours each evening, or I might have bought myself three hundred dollars' worth of beagle hounds. From all the cigarette advertising we read these days, we might think that

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coughing was one of the lost arts, but the fact of the matter is that coughing is now in its heyday. It seems to me that, if anything, there is a coughing renaissance. I don't believe coughing was ever better than it is right this minute in America. There is no way for us to compare the coughing of to-day with coughing of the more cultured eras of Ancient Greece or with coughing of the Middle Ages, but I feel sure that if seismograph readings were available, our modern coughing would take the gold-plated atomizer in the contest. I don't know what the reason is. It may be cigarettes, soft coal or gin. Or it may be that the drama of to-day is enough to irritate anybody's throat. The fact remains that bronchitis is in its glory.

I think that the American Medical Association or the General Electric Company should do something about it.

Why not cough absorbers on each seat in every theater?

Or might it be possible to de-broadcast the audience at every play? Won't somebody come out with a vacuum device which will assimilate the hawkings of the audience and leave matters more to the actors on the stage? If it is possible to broadcast noise (and I'll say it is) why can't the process be reversed? You can run a moving picture projector backwards—why not a broadcasting station? "Coughs in this theater removed by the Schleimmelheimer, Cohen and Letinski Radio Incinerating Station HAK," is a possible future footnote to all theater programs. "Don't throw cigarette stubs into the microphones."

## THE ART OF BRONCHITIS

To-day the Thespian honors in most theatres go unquestionably to the audience. In reality, the cast witnesses the audience. In all fairness to themselves, the Actors' Equity should demand seats for actors and foot-lights turned the other way. I don't know whether our star coughers should be charged double admission or put on the theater payroll. It rather seems to me that the management should soak it to a man who wants to be the show as well as to listen to it.

Theatrical criticism of years to come may read as follows:

"The man in C-14 gave an excellent performance in the new revue, 'Coughs of 1931,' at the Eva Le Gallienne Respiratory Theater last night. Seldom has such finished and full-hearted coughing been heard in a local playhouse. His work had sweep and verve and reverberation, and in many years of theater-going your fatigued correspondent has seldom been so stirred by mere bronchial paroxysms; in fact, not since he sat near a case of virulent whooping cough at the Ringling circus at Madison Square Garden in 1916. C-14 was ably supported by the lady in K-23, who put her entire soul into her art. These two were backed unstintedly by the audience in general. The actors on the stage were moved to tumultuous applause several times during the evening, especially when A-14 worked up to his climax in the second act and practically stopped the show for ten minutes."





### new york traffic, mother of the arts

There is a certain stimulation in narrowly escaping death ten or fifteen times aday. It sharpens all of one's sensibilities for at least a half hour or so to be shaved by a Mack truck going thirty-five miles an hour. If New Yorkers have any edge at all over citizens of, say, Los Angeles, it is, I believe, because New Yorkers are in constant rendezvous with death. Los Angeles is populated by something like a million and a quarter hypochondriacs whose first thought is to live safely; even the traffic laws there are designed to pamper the pedestrian; they provide that he shall wait on the curb until motor traffic is stopped. New Yorkers on the other hand go over the top every time they step off a curb. Who was it who advised us all to live dangerously if we would get the best out of life? New Yorkers do, and if New Yorkers are prouder of their dirty city than

## NEW YORK TRAFFIC, MOTHER OF THE ARTS

they have any right to be it is because they offer themselves for sacrifice on her altar a dozen times a day every day of their lives.

If New York excels in the arts I believe it is because this stimulation is somehow transmitted through the agitated lower classes up through and to the already sharper creative classes. In Los Angeles—just to use the other American city with which I happen to be best acquainted at this moment—the masses are slow molasses. As they flow sluggishly along the sidewalks, one's first impulse is to give them slaps on the rear or hypodermic shots of paprika deftly aimed, but in time the newcomer's pace is gradually reduced to the same dirgelike stroll. If one is blessed with creative neuroses, they are soon soothed to a comfortable slumber in a city like Los Angeles.

Not that it matters a damn one way or the other, but we thus, at any rate, develop the theory that there is a distinct and direct relation between traffic and the arts. It has been said that all national creative spurts have followed periods of war; painting, poetry, and architecture have always thrived on battle. In the past, the rule has been: If you would have great artists, send your men to combat a foreign foe. Today, shall we take it, the rule is to turn traffic on your citizenry, including the women and children? Must art always thrive on annoyance?

I have a friend who is quite unhappily married, and he has been, over a period of several years, eminently successful in every business venture he has undertaken. He remarked to me once that his wife had been a great

## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

help to him in that she had kept him constantly stirred up and irritated. I ask *The American Magazine*: Is an unhappy marriage necessary to success?

I have the theory that art is the product of the entire population of a vicinity, and that if you are to have great painters or great poets you must make messenger boys jump and shoe clerks step lively and shop girls flutter. To create iridescent foam on top, you must agitate the entire contents of the bowl. To get a good novel out of a garret, you must somehow awaken everybody in the subway under the building. We don't realize how much American progress is due to the fact that our forefathers were kept mentally alert by the arrows of the Indians. The four live cities of the United States are New York, Chicago, Detroit, and San Francisco, and I believe they are alive because they are all in some way or another unpleasant places to live, and not, as has heretofore been thought, unpleasant places to live because they are alive. In New York and Detroit, traffic is the great stimulant; in Chicago, the heartbeat is quickened by every motor car backfire, because it may, as likely as not, be another murder, and you, as likely as not, may be the corpse; in San Francisco, it is those nasty, cold, wet winds which whet the town into a metropolitanism, of which the city sister of Los Angeles has as yet no inkling, though they say she has hopes.

New York is a hard-boiled town, inhabited by hard-boiled people, and this, strange as it may seem, makes ideal background for creative activity, whether this activity manifests itself in paintings, novels, skyscrap-



## NEW YORK TRAFFIC, MOTHER OF THE ARTS

ers, Hudson tubes, or financial reorganizations of great corporations. You may say that Booth Tarkington lives in Indianapolis, but I say he has partaken deeply of New York; you may say that such and such a great painter lives in South Carolina, but I happen to know that he maintains a studio in the Beaux Arts Building on Bryant Park; even the Hollywood movies are made on New York capital; all of America is energized by New York; and I think the whole thing resolves itself down to New York traffic, and New York congestion in general. There are too many million people trying to live and walk and work and drive their cars and trucks on an island intended for a comfortable little fishing city of about forty-seven thousand.

The distaste for New York which I have sometimes had has, now, in a measure, been supplanted by a realization of what it is that a horrible city like New York can do for a person or for a people. After two months in New York I will be a worse man than when I came. And that is exactly what I want. I want to be a little snappier towards Mrs. Herold and towards my typewriter and my drawing board. They'll appreciate me more.

In the past five years we have witnessed one of those turns in the trends of architecture which occur in architectural history every five hundred or every thousand years. We have seen the advent of the step-back skyscraper. And it was not the architects who thought of it, but a board of fat-necked New York aldermen who were aiming to keep all of New York from repeating the sunless cañons of lower Manhattan, and

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who prescribed step-back specifications for various sections of the city. Aldermen making architecture, and making it extremely interesting and exciting, where architects might have gone on building cut and dried drygoods boxes until doomsday. And, likewise, we see New York taxi drivers setting the spiritual tempo of a city and, indirectly, of a nation; menacing our life and limb, and thus waking us to a new nervous sensitiveness to all things, including the finer things of life; honking us to higher levels of attainment; scaring us into our wits; dispelling that comfort which is so fatal to all artistic achievement.

\* \* \*



THE END













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